

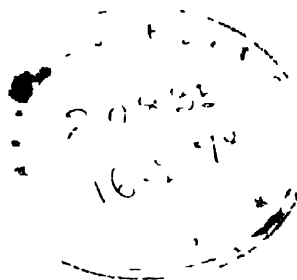
*The  
Golden  
Book  
of  
Saratchandra*





5.2 1966.  
REFERENCE

# The Golden Book of SARATCHANDRA



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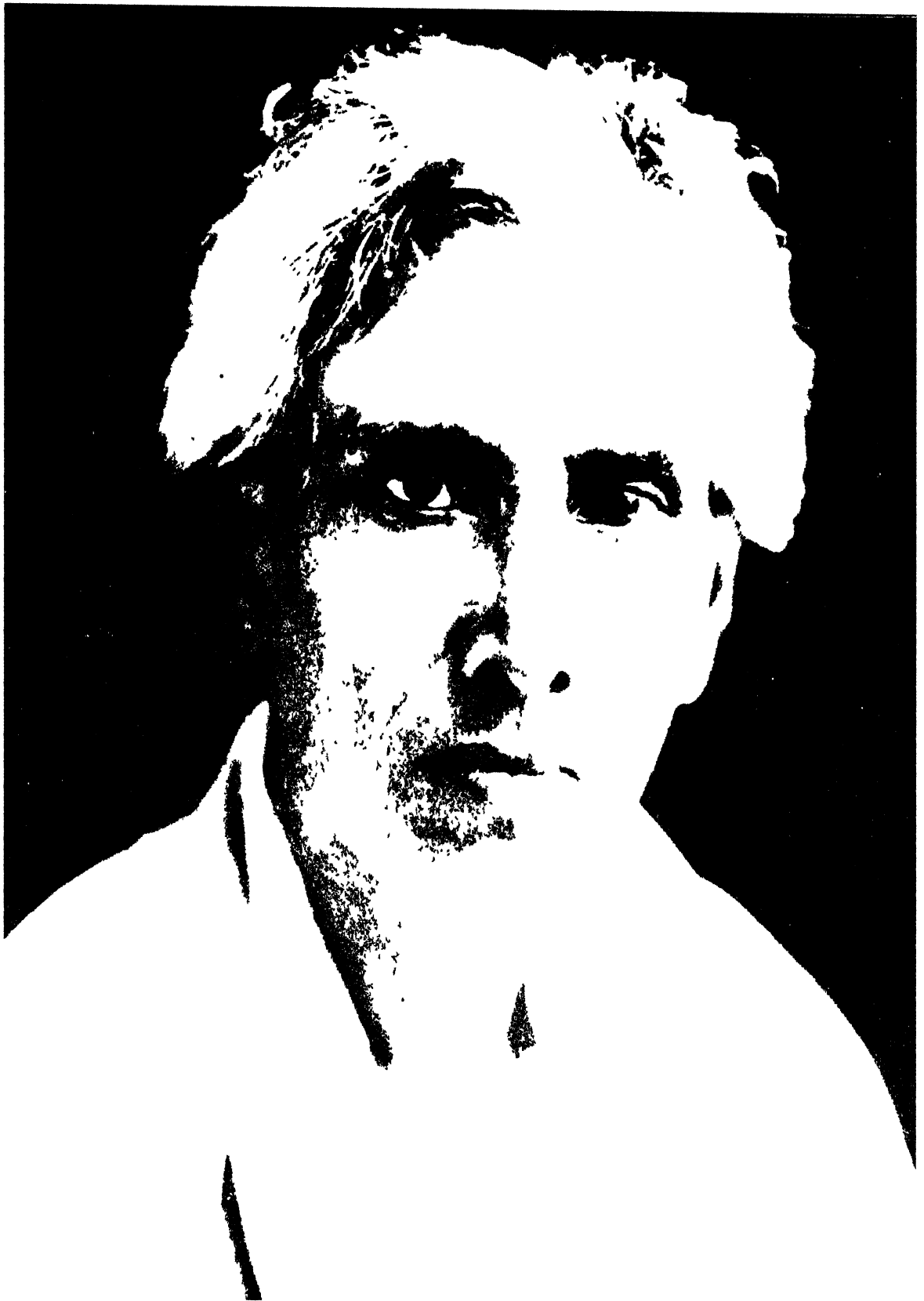
# **The Golden Book of SARATCHANDRA**

## **A Centenary Commemorative Volume**

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## FOREWORD

The All Bengal Sarat Centenary Committee took on the responsibility of bringing out a Centenary Commemorative Volume—The Golden Book of Saratchandra. In undertaking this project our object has been to place before the people a scientific evaluation of Saratchandra. Saratchandra was the first Indian writer who wrote in Bengali and yet transcended the limits of language to gain respect and admiration from the Indian people, and made a tremendous impact upon the literature of all Indian languages. Even after the passage of so many decades his popularity remains unabated in all corners of the land. Side by side with this we astonishingly find some literary critics indulging in a persistent attempt to deprecate the worth of Saratchandra by dubbing him a 'commonplace writer', 'a pedlar of cheap sentiments', and so on. We know that divergent views exist on evaluation of Saratchandra's literature. In this volume we bring together the different views in the hope that the reader will judge critically for himself, after going through the arguments, what are acceptable and what are not. To bring into focus the influence and impact of Saratchandra on the literature of different Indian languages, we invited articles on this specific topic from authors of all the states of India. Their studies appear here in the original languages along with English translations.

A word about the article from Sri Shibdas Ghosh is pertinent here. We approached him for an article for the Golden Book; he consented and started preparing one for it. But his sad, untimely death deprived us of the opportunity of presenting a new article from this outstanding Marxist thinker and philosopher. Under the circumstances, we selected an already published Bengali article by him which is a compilation from several speeches he delivered on the occasions of different birth anniversaries of Saratchandra. The gap-marks in the article denote portions omitted during the compilation. For the English translation of this article we approached the Commission set up by the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Centre of India to compile and publish the works of Sri Shibdas Ghosh. They undertook this difficult task and we express our most grateful thanks to them. In printing this article posthumously we pay our deep respect to the memory of Sri Shibdas Ghosh.



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# In the eye of posterity

Manik Mukhopadhyay

A hundred years have rolled by since Saratchandra Chattopadhyay was born. The passage of time has not lessened his appeal. People warm to him with a delight that no other writings can inspire, for the vision of man he presents is a source of delight in their hopeless gloom. In their wondrous gaze, he is the aesthetic genius who embodies the most profound features of the social urge of his age.

The response, however, has not been without a blend of adverse reaction. As his first major works began to appear, Saratchandra was assailed by the the social diehards for rocking the foundation of the Hindu society by exposing the futility of its age-old precepts, moral concepts and sense of values. He was accused of moral laxity even. In later years, he was denounced by a section of intellectuals for allegedly peddling 'cheap sentimentality'. And, of late, a group of critics with claim to 'progressive ideals' deprecate him for displaying what they call an 'ambivalent attitude' to the socio-political issues of his time. Thus Saratchandra defines, in a peculiar way, a divide between two sections of the people with two opposite attitudes. On the one side is the general reader whose inner self gets churned up as he identifies his yearnings in the creative world of the litterateur, and on the other are the social diehards and religious bigots of the past and the core of our presentday intellectuals who either censure the writer or put a slight upon him.

The appeal of a great work of art is not generally missed at the time of its creation. Great artists elicit response from their people, and people's recognition follows their trails. But their true selves and the full impact of their aesthetic genius do not always become obvious to the contemporary literati. The highbrow academic critic is apt to dismiss popularity as nothing more than a mark of mediocrity. But while popularity cannot lay claim to be the unequivocal index of greatness, the measure of impact a creator leaves on his fellow people has something to tell.

Saratchandra continues to be the most popular writer in this land even today. He has descended into the inmost recesses of the heart of the general reader. But the intellectual reader

does not rate him high. He likes to gloss the writer's popularity as being due to the latter's adaptation to the plain taste of the general reader. But he cannot ignore the writer altogether, for the latter makes deep impact on people. He speaks out against him and, in the course of denunciation, implies certain charges against the writer. We had better begin by enlisting the major ones.

1. The keynote of his literature is a trite sentimentality which may appeal to the general reader, but is not agreeable to the aesthetic taste of the critical reader.

2. His works do not betray a great vision of life, or a deep philosophic insight. Little is there to satisfy the needs of the intellectual reader.

3. He has posed problems but has not offered solutions. He has not gone far to fulfil the role of a socially conscious artist.

4. His portraiture of life is confined to the narrow canvas of his own direct experience. Originality and imagination—the two virtues of great art—are missing in him.

5. He is rooted to a narrow and contemporary world. The vista of universality is missing in his creative world, and is beyond his reach too.

6. In his romantic obsession with tender emotions, he has banished sex from his literature.

7. On social questions he has betrayed an inconsistent and ambivalent attitude. There is no reflection of the working class concepts in his works, so he cannot be called a revolutionary writer. He was a reformist at best and on certain questions conservative even.

The critics' charges imply questions which should be met on a theoretical premiss. Great writers plumb human life and society to create a world of aesthetic beauty and delight. But life and society do not remain static or constant in character and form; like everything else they change and evolve continuously. Works of great writers, like any other human creation, are product of particular stages of this changing panorama; in that sense they have their own conditions of social-historical existence, their own limits of space and time. In critical evaluation of works of art critics prefer a distance, a distance in time, in order that the appraisal may be free from aberrations of proximity. This is what they term the 'judgement of time'. But a distance as such cannot avail. Critical evaluation needs a proper outlook, a correct angle from which to judge. Social evolution in the course of time opens up wider horizons before man and equips him with more and more advanced outlook for surveying the monuments of his past. The centennial of Saratchandra—a sufficient distance in the formal mode of literary criticism—would not have really helped us achieve a correct appraisal of the litterateur if we had not among us a thinker to point out how to read clearly the social-historical context of Saratchandra and his philosophic background and evaluate critically the aesthetic beauty of his works. To study Saratchandra now without the light of analysis of the great Marxist thinker and philosopher, Sri Shibdas Ghosh, would not advance us at all from where we stand—appreciating in some form or the other works of the litterateur, while continuing to be confounded by the lingering opposite reactions of the general reader and the intellectual.

The academic critic's censure of Saratchandra rests primarily on a charge of trite sentimentality against the author. It has been argued that his works betray a kind of indulgence in emotional overplay; the thematic structure, the characters, the treatment—all these are fashioned in his works to wring out only emotions. Literary works of this kind, in the opinion of the critics, may well satisfy the emotional requirement of the general reader, but they

possess little to fulfil the aesthetic requirement of the literati. The charge should be examined in the context of the role of emotion in appreciation of art. There will be little disagreement, it is hoped, if it be said that the function of literature, as of any other art, is to offer aesthetic delight. But there is no aesthetic delight without a message from the writer. The message flowing from the writer's concept of life comes in an aesthetic form which acts on the one at the receiving end and triggers an emotional response in him. Aesthetic delight consists in relish of this emotional response. It is at the same time that the communication of message has occurred. This is true not only of creative art, but of critical studies too.

At the reader's end, response is not without its own factors. Readers of all ages have their respective yearnings, sensibilities and feelings. These are not timeless features, but are conditioned by the particular social-historical stage of existence and, therefore, vary in essence and form, from age to age in every society. A reader's appreciation of a literary work means that the impact of the work brings about an aesthetic fulfilment of the yearnings and feelings in him. In his approach to a literary work, a reader is guided by his sensibility, his concept of beauty in art and his concept of life. His yearnings and feelings are expression of these faculties in him. It is quite possible that the reader may not be really conscious of these factors guiding his approach, but these factors do combine to shape his own role in the process. So, aesthetic delight at its base, depends not only on the message and art-form of the writer, but on the yearnings and feelings of the reader as well. And the greater the fulfilment of the yearnings, the deeper is the emotional response and wider the appeal of the work of art. *Hamlet* continues to delight us because its aesthetic grace conveying the creator's concept of life fulfils some of our feelings and yearnings even today. *Resurrection's* appeal reaches deep into us for the way it effects an aesthetic fulfilment of some of our social urges cramped within the crust of hard-dying old values.

In point of fact, when man wants to put into effect his knowledge in social and individual life as guide to action, he has to channelise it along the track of emotion. In literary art the writer's concept of life which is the message he communicates, works its way through impact on emotional feelings. Art has, therefore, to be judged chiefly by the emotional response it arouses in the subject. This is where emotion's role assumes singular importance. The question of sentimentality should be examined in this context. When does an emotional response rise to aesthetic delight and when does it slip into sentimentality? There is a point at which a line can be drawn. Some would like to argue that this point varies from man to man. But to argue like that would simply mean to invite anarchy in reasoning. Literature, like life itself, has its own laws. For, literature is the conscious portrayal of life in aesthetic form. To be aesthetically satisfying, a literary work has to be moulded in conformity with the laws of literature, no doubt of course according to the category of understanding of the laws at any given stage of social development. Unless a literary work is made in conformity with its laws, not only is the content crooked, the emotions it arouses are bound to be contrived, unrealistic and imposed. Aesthetically satisfying emotional feelings have their marks of distinction. These do not stray from the course of reasoning, but maintain instead an artistic restraint which lends to their power of appealing. They are the effect of conscious creation, so consciousness of life is ingrained in them. And this consciousness gives them a social direction whereby they act to rouse the subject to life, deepen his sensibility, and strengthen his personality. Whereas, emotional response that is divested of reasoning and true consciousness of life degrades the personality of the subject and makes him apathetic to life while failing to rouse him to life's deeper significances. Emotion, at this point, turns into sentimentality.

In this context another aspect of aesthetic delight should be considered. Pleasure in art does not derive from happy ending alone. A great tragedy induces a deep pain in us. The artist's treatment does not evoke a sense of detachment parting us from the character suffering a tragic consequence. Rather it effects our identification with the character. The identification occurs not because we have individually passed through identical sufferings. The social experience of human suffering in its manifold aspects exists in each of us, in varying shapes, in the form of a concept of human suffering, or what may be called an image of suffering humanity. Our own personal experiences are merged with this image no doubt, but the image is the symbol of our total idea of human suffering. When we see a reflection of this image in a tragic portrayal, the tragedy works through the image and evokes a response in our concept of human suffering stirring up, in the end, a sea of pathos. The identification that occurs in this way arises from a particular character's sufferings, but the character is symbolic of human suffering in some of its universal aspects. So, it is not just the personal suffering of a particular human being, any other person can be projected in his place—in fact, the reader projects himself in that place. An experience or feeling of this kind is free from fears attending personal sufferings. It assumes, in effect, an impersonal character and the partition between pain and pleasure collapses—pain is transmuted into aesthetic pleasure. In the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet* we see a reflection of human tragedy in a particular form. This brings about our identification with the hero and the heroine on an impersonal level. And the pain of tragedy is relished in aesthetic delight.

The art of Saratchandra makes a sustaining demand on the emotions of the general reader. The latter experiences a simple and direct appeal which works profoundly in his emotions. The detractors of the writer refuse to see in this emotional response the workings of higher art. Perhaps, the spontaneity and effortless ease with which communication takes place make the appeal look like commonplace sentimentality in the eye of these critics. But they must admit that the classics—and all great works of art at that—have a simple and direct appeal to people at large. The simple yet penetrative appeal of Saratchandra is largely due to the fact that the author has recreated life in accordance with the laws of literary art. His creative world is not a facsimile of life; he has emboldened it by his message which is the content of his works. Leaving aside the question of content for the time being, attention should be turned here to a singular aspect of his literary form which he has chiselled out with his concept of art. Saratchandra's art easily evokes profound emotion in the reader's mind but the works themselves are free of prolixity and exuberance. There is no emotional overplay in the situational development arising out of the conflicts among characters, nor are the characters given to emotional indulgence. Artistic restraint is the keyword of Saratchandra's artform. Scenes etched in sorrow and pain of life abound in his creative world. But nowhere are these drawn with more than a few deft and pithy touches. The scene of Rām (*Rāmēr Sumati*), clutching a small bundle of his few belongings, taking leave of his *boudidi* (Nārāvaṇ) to step out into the unknown outside world, or of Gōkul beseeching his step-mother not to part with him, strikes deep into heart evoking intense pathos. Bindu's filial affection for Amūly (*Bindur Chhēlē*), Siddhēśwarī's concern for the children of Śailajā (*Niṣkṛti*), the scene of Sābitrī silently shedding tears in a corner hiding herself from Satīś (*Charitrahīn*)—innumerable such portraiture clusters in the works of Saratchandra move the reader to the core of his heart. The materials of art have all been drawn from the familiar homely world—the work-a-day life. The plot is built upon the weals and woes of everyday life. The characters have all known faces. But this familiarity does not cause an aversion in the reader. On the contrary, he is drawn irresistibly to the creative world of Saratchandra. What is the mystery? In point of fact, the materials of that world are basically the same as cause the emotional

effusions in the common man's everyday life. The academic critic's interpretation of it has been that Saratchandra puts his finger on the common man's tender heart and presses out a kind of sentimental flow that is as commonplace as its source. But this interpretation does not stand to reason. For, if it were so, Saratchandra could not have left such profound and sustaining impact on people at large nor could his appeal transgress barriers of language, region and creed during all these years after his death. Other authors have earned much praise, but never such a welcome from the heart of the people. This is not the thrill of wonder, it is deep affection. Then what is there in Saratchandra's art that lends it such power of appeal? No doubt the writer has been selective in his approach to art and choice of materials. He has not touched many, but has touched those heartstrings which imply the yearnings of his people. His message and form of art have combined to bring about an aesthetic fulfilment of these yearnings.

A host of characters have been projected in his works. Each is a personality to be reckoned with. Bindu, Nārāyanī, Bhabānī, Siddhēśwari, Biswēswari, Rājlakṣmī— all these characters are portrayals of a kind of filial affection that is not limited to a distinction between those who are one's own and those who are not. Ramā and Ramēś, or Sābitrī and Satīś are portrayals of love. But none of them have cared for personal happiness. They have forgone their personal love and have embraced pain. The way these characters have been painted—the assemblage of qualities by virtue of which they place social needs above personal needs and their outlook on life which prompts them to embrace personal sufferings for the sake of their ethical conscience—makes impact on the reader's cherished image for filial affection and love. The reader discovers his own concept of filial affection and love, even if it be in the form of rudiments of the social concept reflected in the filial affection of Nārāyanī for Rām, or in the love between Ramā and Ramēś. This causes the identification, the effusion of emotions, and the consequent aesthetic delight. The affection or love, in the eyes of the reader, is no longer an emotive relation between a particular Nārāyanī and a particular Rām, or a particular Ramā and a particular Ramēś. It appears on an impersonal plane with a universal content in a given social background. The character portrayals of Saratchandra work up an intense feeling of want for these impersonal aspects in all human relations. The reader intensely longs to get in touch with them, freed as they are of personal mooring. The author's art finally gives him an aesthetic fulfilment that brings a cathartic relief of the pent up emotions.

Does that weaken his personality structure or does that strengthen it by deepening his sensibility and heightening his consciousness? Are those characters themselves diminished by their emotional conflicts? The detractors of Saratchandra appear to take a poor view of the role of emotional response in the field of art. But how did the epics appeal through the long ages? How do Shakespeare, Goethe or Tolstoy appeal? If tears well up when life's agony churns the heart nothing of the sentimental sort happens. No amount of intellectual indifference can ever match the aesthetic delight which art creates out of agony and ecstasy of life. The profundity of emotions which Saratchandra stirs up is proof of both the greatness and the success of his art, not the weakness of it.

The significance and importance of emotional response in the matter of appreciation of art and literature become still more apparent when we try to read critically the creator's message. In the academic critic's assessment Saratchandra's literature is not resplendent with a deep philosophic insight or a great vision of man and his destiny nor is it endowed with enough intellectual capacity to appeal to the intellectual reader. The judgement, with seeming circumspection actually stems from a confusion over the mode of conveyance, in literary art of the

writer's outlook on life, his vision of man, and his concept of art in a word the content of his literature. How is the content really conveyed in creative art? The question assumes paramount importance in critical evaluation of art and literature. As a matter of fact, a creative artist is not an annotator of life. The fiction, for example, is not expected to be burdened with long reflective passages on life and society, nor is the writer expected to indulge in discoursing upon human relations. He is not to give lectures on life, he is to recreate it imparting into the creation his outlook on it. The canon of literature requires that the message be conveyed not through harangues, or commentaries, but through an aesthetic beauty which the artform is to create.

At this point a little digression may be entered upon. Form and content are two aspects of art. The two are enlinked inseparably and it may be said that form is the formative existence of content. Perception of a work of art is possible only through its form. For example, when we read a fiction we perceive the creator's concept of life, that is his message, through the characterisation, the dialogues, the diction, and so forth all those which together constitute its form. Every writer ensconces in his portrayal, with varying degree of consciousness, what he intends to convey. But the priority of content notwithstanding, the role of form assumes manifold importance in the domain of art. Presenting a truth of life, however much profound, or portraying a human relation, however much deep, through commentaries or expository passages does not make art of a composition. A boy and a girl are in love to inform us of it may be presenting a truth, but not a piece of literary art. For something to be of art value it depends upon how it is told—how artistically it is portrayed. But it must not be missed that great art is not made of great form alone. The content must be great too. The love between a boy and a girl—if it is shorn of great elements—cannot be transmuted into a great work of art however much a writer of great artistic capabilities may try. Whatever appeal it may have will be but transient. It may be a product of fashion, but not one of style. It may dazzle for a while, but cannot leave a lasting imprint. In point of fact, we cannot forget the characters of Saratchandra's works because of the consummate grace with which their noble content works in us.

Whether a deep philosophic insight inspires the works of Saratchandra or not can be judged in the light of the discussion made above. As a matter of fact, Sri Shibdas Ghosh, the foremost Marxist thinker of the era, has shown convincingly what should be the scientific historic approach to evaluation of art and literature and has made a comprehensive and scientific appraisal of the art and philosophy of Saratchandra against the basic features of his social environ and times. He has upheld the truth, for the first time, that the literary thought of Saratchandra has been moulded by the secular humanist concept. The social-historical context of Saratchandra was marked by an intense social urge for the democratic norms of life, individual liberty and women's emancipation and an aspiration of the people for freedom from the feudal and imperialist exploitations. If the works of Saratchandra are carefully studied, a singular theme, in various shapes, can be deciphered in the entire spectrum of his creative world—agony of a people's life that has been strained beyond measure by feudal superstitions and prejudices, religious bigotry and imperialist exploitation, and, side by side, a longing for freeing all human relations from the feudal and imperialist bondages. As a literary artist Saratchandra's aim has been to evoke, in the reader's mind, a strong feeling of want for a secular humanist concept of life and a sense of values that alone could fulfil people's yearning in that epoch. He has probed life with a secular humanist philosophic insight which was historically the most progressive outlook of his times. His secular concept is reflected in his portrayal of human relation in its manifold aspects. The literary trend in this country before the advent of Saratchandra

was nourished by the idealist philosophy. He has initiated for the first time in Indian literature the materialist outlook on life and his works mark a clear break with idealism.

Bindu, Nārāyaṇī, Rājlakṣmī and a host of other mother characters which he projects do not bask in the glory of a conventional kind which the feudal concept of motherhood enjoins. In bestowing their filial affection these characters have not been guided by a consideration of blood relation alone, which necessarily prompts a distinction between one's own child and that of somebody else. Nārāyaṇī loves both her own child Gōbinda, and her husband's step brother, Rām. Certain things about Rām, namely his orphanhood, his boyish pranks and his compliance with *boudidi* have combined in effect to appeal to a concept of ethical motherhood she cherishes in the depth of her heart. Her concept of motherhood prompts her to appreciate the qualities of Rām and makes her a mother unto this compliant prodigal. This impersonal character of her motherhood not only enraptures us but makes the filial affection of her own mother look a repulsively selfish attachment. But nowhere in the narrative has the author intruded to inform us of the impersonal nature of this motherhood. The inarticulate narration appears to have fallen flat on the academic critic but the general reader is simply delighted by the message conveyed through aesthetic fulfilment.

Love's portrait has been drawn in the same light in Saratchandra's works. A whole gallery of pictures drawn on different aspects of love appears in his literature. The social precepts and prevailing concepts of morality have stood between Ramā and Ramēs and Sābitrī and Satīs in their yearning for freedom of love. Abhayā (*Śrīkānta*) testifies to the abysmal ignominy of womanhood in the Hindu society. The scars of whipping on her person are not her husband's misdoing only, these are more of the society's. But she revolts against the society and takes the most courageous step to place womanhood on a very high pedestal of dignity. Rājlakṣmī is a victim of the rigorous customs of the Hindu society which has condemned her to dishonour and sufferings. The society has forced her into the utter disgrace of the life of a 'fallen woman', but the same society cries shame on her calling her a sinful woman. This censure begets a sense of guilt and works as a social prejudice standing in the way of her cherished union with Śrīkānta whom she loves from the core of her heart. When she overcomes the prejudice, she discovers a strange conflict between her mother-self and her lover-self. She feels deeply concerned if her adopted son Baṅku would accept with honour her union with Śrīkānta. She is unwilling to seek personal pleasure in a love which may spell a depreciation of the dignity of her motherhood. Her sense of motherhood has blended with her yearning for love to make her womanhood bloom into a much fuller dignity.

The Renaissance movement in the country had reached its acme at the time of Saratchandra. The urge for the bourgeois democratic revolution had intensified into a mighty upsurge against the existing social order resulting into crosscurrents of conflicting social trends. Saratchandra has conveyed the significance of this lurking conflict in individual and social life through portrayal of a myriad of characters in the varied situations of life. Kiranmayī and Achalā are two memorable portraits in the background of this most profound social feature of contemporary society. The moribund Hindu society could not be revitalised through any reform of religion because the role of religion had been completely exhausted at that time. Only a secular outlook on life could free the entire gamut of social thoughts and concepts from the religious vestiges and ensure the freedom of the individual and the emancipation of women. Achalā (*Gṛhadāhu*) has a deep longing for individual liberty. She loves Mahim and marries him from her craving for a life that is emancipated from superstition and prejudices. But she fails to rear her love



and conjugal life with Mahim. She does not succeed even in maintaining her unfaltering friendship with Surēs. nor can she develop an unprejudiced love with him. Kiranmayī too, desires an emancipated life. But the door to emancipation is closed to her in the existing society. She loves Upen but cannot thrust herself even on this ground, for she knows that she will be depriving Surabālā in that event. Her conscience does not allow her to do so. Side by side with them the author has presented us with two other female characters, Mīnāl and Surabālā. They are not inspired by any longing for individual liberty and emancipation. They are bound by the blind religious beliefs, superstitions and prejudices of the Hindu society. But these blind religious beliefs and prejudices work in them as a deep conviction and faith. It is this faith which serves as a deep root in their life. Achalā and Kiranmayī have a craving for a higher sense of values which they can attain only by freeing themselves from religious bigotry and social prejudices. But they have not found anything conducive to their yearning in society, which they are clutch with conviction and faith. The result is that whereas the foundation of the older faith in them has been shaken, no newer faith has taken root. This is why they have been thrown overboard in the turmoils of life—Achalā wrecking her home and Kiranmayī straying into derangement. The author points out to the reader that Achalā and Kiranmayī who have a longing for individual liberty and emancipation cannot find the faith and conviction of life in religious sense of values—not even through reformation of religion. But life without the foundation of some faith is like a tree without roots. Mīnāl and Surabālā have roots even in their superstitious beliefs. But Achalā and Kiranmayī, despite their accomplishments, have not any. Only the secular humanist outlook could provide them with a nobler concept of life and morality to act as the necessary conviction and faith. What transformation is brought in a woman when she is endowed with what has been denied to Achalā and Kiranmayī is beautifully illustrated by Kamal in *Sev Prasna*. To mould her in the secular humanist concept of life which the Hindu society is incapable of providing, the author has reared her up in a milieu different from that of Kiranmayī, Achalā and the like. Kamal has acquired the secular outlook from her struggle in life in a particular environ. She has freed herself from the bondage of religious beliefs and prejudices. So, a fine taste and a deep sense of self-respect, dignity and morality have combined in her character. Her love is dynamic, but she never confuses freedom with license. Her concept of freedom of love has a high ethical and aesthetic base. A subtle manifestation of it occurs when her relationship with Śibnāth breaks down. She is pained when Śibnāth turns away from her and falls in love with Manōramā. But she bears the pain silently and her respect for Śibnāth does not diminish for that. But the moment Śibnāth casts aspersions on her friendship with Rajēn, he slides down in her eyes.

Illustrations can be cited in plenty to show how deeply Snatchindia has plumbed life in the light of the highest concept of truth of his times. But the critics sum up their estimate calling him a good story teller. On the face of it the epithet appears to give a fair estimate of his literary merit. But in point of fact, it conjures up only a wrong vision of the writer. He has not told us stories. He has portrayed characters through whom he conveys the essence of the social urge and social crosscurrents of his age. The story element in his works helps to constitute only the necessary milieu in which the characters come in conflict. In fact, one has to grope if asked to tell the story of any of his works. All one can say is about the characters and the conflict between them. This is because the author does not intrude, he only introduces the characters who in their turn, move through vicissitudes in their course of development. Characterisation is the chief element of his literary technique and this style is the mark of all great novels and stories. Life portrayed in this literary form is not reduced to a narrative, but appears as a living portrait. Consequently, this artform acts more effectively on the reader's mind than the story-telling technique.

The critics' denunciation of Saratchandra stems, in the main, from a wrong approach to the litterateur and the consequent failure to grasp the essence of his literary thought and artform. It has been said that Saratchandra has posed problems but has not offered solutions. A reading of the sort is neither factually correct, nor indicative of a proper understanding of the mode of conveyance in art. There are characters who have taken it upon themselves to show the way to solution in their own spheres—Ramēs, Bṛṇḍāban and Sabyasācī, for example. But more important, the creative artist's way of offering solution is not the same as that of the politician, sociologist, philosopher and the like. The creative artist does not make plain propaganda; his message is concealed in his art. That is his style of expressing views. Saratchandra has given a literary expression to his view on the fundamental aspect of all social-political problems of his time. Through portrayal of conflicts in life, he has sought to create agony and ecstasy in the reader's mind in order to open his eyes to the urgent social necessity to change the society, not through reforms but by nothing short of social revolution. This basic stand of his on the solution of social problems finds expression in various forms in his literature. Ramēs and Bṛṇḍāban set themselves to the task of enlightening the village people, Abhayā revolts against social bigotry and Sabyasācī traces the revolutionary path to freedom of the country—and so forth.

Judging in the same light the futility of the charge against the writer that his canvas is narrow becomes obvious. It is admitted by all informed critics that sitting on an armchair, without experience of life, one can make fanciful sojourns but cannot create literature. To be a litterateur one has to know life. And the importance of direct experience of life in works of art lies here. The real measure of a writer's canvas is not in the arena of life he sweeps, but the depth of life he probes. Even if the arena were a measure, Saratchandra has certainly a very big canvas—a fact mentioned by the most renowned men of letters contemporary with him. But this apart, the depth he has probed is really amazing. An example may be adduced here. In his treatment on love, Saratchandra has reared it up to a level where he probes the question of unity of minds vis-à-vis unity of ideals in a dialogue between Rajen and Kamal in *Sey Prasna*. Where is a second example of this aspect being probed by any other humanist litterateur in the world? Rajlīksmī, Kīrenmayī, Abhaya may have originals in the writer's personal experience. But they are not mere reflections of the originals; the writer has imbued them with his creative vision. Kamal may not have any original. She is the projection of the writer's contemplation of what ought to be—she is the aesthetic embodiment of the most advanced concept of life in the existing social order. She is real for the idea behind her is real.

Saratchandra is rooted in a contemporary and narrow world, he lacks a universal appeal—this is another charge against the writer. At this point, it may be mentioned that on the issue of universality of literature it is the content which should be primarily assessed. A great work of art even has a form that is peculiar or particular to a country at a given social-historical stage. Its content, however, is a general truth at the given stage of social development. A literary work with universal appeal has, as its content, an outlook on life that is universal in character at a given stage of social development. Saratchandra's literature reflects the social urge that was general throughout the country. That is why even though he has portrayed the life in Bengal, his appeal has transcended the limits of contemporary Bengali society. His voice echoes throughout the country. In giving literary form to the political aspiration of his people, he has made the national liberation struggle his theme. In fact, the concrete understanding and expression of internationalism in his times meant to support the national liberation struggle.

in each country and the struggle against imperialism Saratchandra has done this job both through literary pursuit and through his personal participation in the independence movement of the country. On the contrary, people who have bypassed this imperative task and have cried themselves hoarse over internationalism or have been too concerned with universal brotherhood to spare themselves for the national movement and who have denounced the latter as betraying a narrow outlook have failed really to grasp what internationalism or universal brotherhood means.

In his portrayal of love, Saratchandra does not take to vivid detailing of the sexual passions of love. He is, however, not a Platonist—realistically, sexual passion lies deep at the base of his love narratives. But as an artist his concern has been to portray the beauties which two minds in love go on creating. This role of mind in the matter of love relation is what enables man and woman to free their habits, feelings and emotions from the tentacles of feudal prejudices. The writer's effort has been directed at portraying how the passion of the flesh can be elevated to the aesthetic level of artistic passion of love between two minds.

Criticism against the writer thus, ranges between two ends. While his art has been adjudged to be lacking in superior quality of the classics by proponents of 'pure art', he has been labelled 'backdated' by a louder section of self-styled Marxist critics of art and literature. The former limit their criticism to an aesthetic judgement on Saratchandra's art and the latter look for the social content of his literature. So long the latter have held him conservative—one who has made a compromise with the feudal and religious sense of values. Now they attempt at reevaluation taking a second look at him, and also a third—ostensibly to guard against any chance indulgence in a sweeping conclusion about one who is the literary idol of the people. In their reconsidered view the literature of Saratchandra does not betray any working class concept even though his works appeared after proletarian revolution was demonstrated to be a reality and proletarian ideology had captured the minds of many intellectuals and writers not only in Europe but in India too. In fine their erstwhile superciliousness has given place to condescension. But the substance of the charge remains the same—that Saratchandra is a reformist at best not a revolutionary. This is essentially a matter of evaluating the philosophical outlook of the writer in his social context.

As has been said earlier, Saratchandra appeared at a time when this country was in the stage of the bourgeois democratic revolution. So, the man and his art—whether progressive or reactionary, revolutionary or compromising—have to be judged in that context. It was not his historical condition to be a writer with the proletarian outlook on life. To accuse him, then, of failure to sing in socialist revolution tantamounts to looking for something which did not devolve upon him as a historical task. The international phase was of imperialism and proletarian revolution. This means that even the bourgeois democratic revolutions of different countries need, for their logical culmination, the establishment of the leadership of the proletariat. It was not Saratchandra's task as a writer to develop the proletarian leadership. People who proclaimed themselves as communists at that time could not develop the proletarian leadership since they had failed to acquire the communist character. But still, if we look into it carefully, we would find some reflections of the working class concept in the literature of Saratchandra. His philosophy belongs essentially to the category of mechanical materialism. But in the course of development he has come very close to dialectical materialism. The concept of truth he presents through Kamal in *Śēṣ Prāśna*, or his own observations on truth in some of his essays

bear testimony to it. Rāmdās Talwārkār's preaching of revolutionary ideals in *Pathēr Dāhī* and Śrikānta's remark on seeing the plight of workers at a construction site fringe upon the working class concept. The writer's kinship with the proletarian ideology finds an expression in his comments on the prevailing modern trend in Bengali literature to the effect that the day this literature will be able to probe further down and portray, like the Russian literature, the life in the lower depths, it will be able to make room for itself in the sphere of world literature.

The academic critics and the pseudo Marxists fail to note the real character of the philosophic vision and the aesthetic beauty of Saratchandra's literature, because they have become a derascinated lot altogether. As Sri Shibdas Ghosh, the great Marxist thinker, points out, we have lost the link with our great cultural heritage. Our context—social, political, economic—is different from Saratchandra's. We come in continuity with him, but there is a break also with his times and social context. Our task of social revolution is different from his. But to forge ahead today, we shall have to devote ourselves to evaluating Saratchandra correctly and assimilating the essence of his literature. It is only by exhausting his thoughts, ideas and concepts that we can advance worthily in our changed context today.

In the first centennial of the great literary genius, this is our appreciation of him and our homage.



# **The Litterateur**

## **man, art, philosophy**



Articles are presented in this part. The contributions include studies on works of Saratchandra, his impact on modern Indian literature, his art and philosophy, specific aspects of his literature, reminiscences and, above all, a comprehensive evaluation of the writer. Each article is accompanied by an English version. Foreign contributions, however, excepting the one from Bangla Desh, appear in English only. Translator's name appears where rendering has been done by one other than the author himself. The articles appear in the alphabetical order of the languages. Those in Bengali, however, come after others, while foreign contributions appear in the end.

Titles of works appear in italics. Transliteration of titles and names of characters in Saratchandra's works has been done keeping in view the spelling in Bengali. For works of other authors, it has been done on similar lines.



To facilitate reading, a table of transliteration of the relevant Bengali alphabetical letters giving alongside approximate pronunciation wherever possible, is given below

|     |        |                                    |               |
|-----|--------|------------------------------------|---------------|
| a   | অ      | approx. as in Eng.                 | <i>all</i>    |
| ā   | আ      | " " " "                            | <i>art</i>    |
| ai  | ঐ      | long diphthong (ō + i)             |               |
| au  | ঔ      | " " (ō + u)                        |               |
| b   | ব      | approx. as in Eng.                 | <i>ball</i>   |
| bh  | ভ      | " " " "                            | <i>voice</i>  |
| ch  | চ      | approx. as in Eng                  | <i>change</i> |
| chh | ছ      | ch, aspirated                      |               |
| d   | দ      | approx. as <i>th</i> in Eng.       | <i>that</i>   |
| ḍ   | ড      | approx. as in Eng.                 | <i>dawn</i>   |
| dh  | ধ      | voiced interdental stop, aspirated |               |
| ē   | ঈ      | approx. as in Eng.                 | <i>bell</i>   |
| ē   | ঐ      | " " " "                            | <i>get</i>    |
| gh  | ঘ      | voiced velar stop, aspirated       |               |
| h   | হ      | approx. as in Eng.                 | <i>hall</i>   |
| h   | ঃ      | sanskrit <i>visarga</i>            |               |
| i   | ই      | approx. as in Eng.                 | <i>it</i>     |
| i   | ঐ      | " " <i>ee</i> " "                  | <i>tree</i>   |
| j   | জ      | approx. as in Eng                  | <i>joy</i>    |
| jh  | ঝ      | palatal affricate, voiced          |               |
| k   | ক      | approx. as in Eng.                 | <i>kill</i>   |
| kh  | খ      | k, aspirated strongly              |               |
| l   | ল      | approx. as in Eng                  | <i>long</i>   |
| m   | ম      | " " " "                            | <i>man</i>    |
| n   | ন      | " " " "                            | <i>no</i>     |
| n   | ণ      | cerebral nasal                     |               |
| ñ   | ঞ      | palatal nasal                      |               |
| m n | ঙ/ন    | approx. as <i>ng</i> in Eng.       | <i>song</i>   |
| o   | ও      | approx. as in Eng                  | <i>rope</i>   |
| p   | প      | " " " "                            | <i>pen</i>    |
| ph  | ফ      | " " " "                            | <i>photo</i>  |
| r   | র      | " " " "                            | <i>rock</i>   |
| ṛ   | ৳      | cerebral r                         |               |
| ṛ   | ৳/৳    | approx. as <i>ri</i> in Eng        | <i>grip</i>   |
| s   | স      | approx. as in Eng                  | <i>sauce</i>  |
| s   | শ      | " " <i>sh</i> " "                  | <i>shop</i>   |
| s   | ষ      | cerebral sibilant                  |               |
| t   | ত      | unvoiced interdental stop          |               |
| t   | ট      | approx. as in Eng.                 | <i>tall</i>   |
| th  | থ      | " " " "                            | <i>thirty</i> |
| th  | ঠ      | t, aspirated                       |               |
| u   | উ      | approx. as <i>oo</i> in Eng        | <i>moot</i>   |
| ū   | ঊ      | approx. as in Eng                  | <i>true</i>   |
| w   | ৱ      | when post-consonantal              |               |
| y   | য/য়/ঐ | subscript or post consonantal      |               |
| ~   | ৳      | on the top of vowel (nasalised)    |               |

Besides, jñ stands for ঞ and kṣ for ক্ষ

# কলাকাৰ শৰৎচন্দ্ৰ

বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্য্য

শৰৎচন্দ্ৰৰ উপন্যাস সামাজিক উপন্যাসৰ পথ প্ৰদৰ্শক। সামাজিক শব্দটোৱে উপকৰণগত আৰু দৃষ্টিভঙ্গীগত দুয়োটাৰে বুজায়। উপন্যাসৰ মাধ্যমেদি বঙ্গ দেশৰ জনসাধাৰণৰ অন্তৰ্নিহিত অচেতন শক্তিয়েই যি প্ৰকাশ কৰিছিল এনে নহয়, শেষৰ ফালৰ উপন্যাসসমূহত অন্যায় আৰু অসাম্যৰ বিৰুদ্ধে সচেতন বিদ্ৰোহৰ শক্তিও ফুটাই উলিছিল।

শৰৎচন্দ্ৰই নিজৰ নিৰ্দিষ্ট শ্ৰেণীৰ গণ্য আৰু নাৰ্যাণ সমাজৰ সকলো শ্ৰেণীৰ অভিজ্ঞতাকে উপন্যাসৰ উপকৰণ কৰি লৈছিল। যি তেওঁ সমাজ স্থিতিশীল নহয়, সেইবাবে সমাজৰ বিভিন্ন শ্ৰেণীৰ সম্পৰ্কও সলনি হৈ থাকে। তেওঁৰ উপন্যাসবোৰত এই সলনিৰ বাবে হোৱা সংস্কাৰবাদী আৰু বৈপ্লৱিক আন্দোলনবোৰৰ ছবি আছে। উপন্যাসবোৰৰ 'চেটিং' সামৰণতে নিম্নলিখিত পৰিস্থিতিৰ আৱন-বৃত্ত। এই জীৱন-বৃত্তৰ মাজত ঘটা সলনি ঘাইকৈ নব-নাৰাৰ সম্পৰ্কৰ মাজেদি চিত্ৰিত কৰিছে। নব-নাৰাৰ সম্পৰ্কৰ মাজেদি এখন সমাজৰ অন্তৰ্ভূতৰ আভাস দিব পৰা যায়। নাবাৰ মুক্তৰ সপোনৰ মাজেদি সমাজখনৰ অন্যায় আৰু অসাম্যসমূহ প্ৰকাশ কৰিছিল। লগতে তেওঁ সেই বিলাক দূৰাভূত কৰাৰ হাঁহুতা দিছিল। তেওঁৰ উপন্যাস বনোৱা সাধাৰণ বৈশিষ্ট্য আছিল 'ননু' কথোৱাটো। অৰ্থাৎ উপন্যাসবোৰে পাঠকক পীড়িত চৰিত্ৰটিৰ প্ৰাণ এনেদৰে আকৰ্ষিত কৰে যে সেয়ে শেষত পাঠকৰ মনত সামাজিক বৃপান্তৰৰ প্ৰয়োজনৰ ভাব জগাই তোলে। শেষৰ ফালৰ উপন্যাসবোৰত তেওঁ কথোপকথনৰ মাজেদিও এই প্ৰয়োজনৰ ভাব স্পষ্ট ভাবে ব্যক্ত কৰিছিল। 'পল্লীসমাজ'ত শ্ৰীকান্ত'ত ঘটনাৰ বৰ্মবিবৰণৰ বা আবৰ্তনৰ মাজেদি চৰিত্ৰাংকণত এই বোধ স্পষ্ট হৈ পৰিছে। আনহাতে 'পথেৰ দাবী' আৰু শেষ প্ৰস্তাৱত এই প্ৰয়োজনৰ ভাব ঘাই চৰিত্ৰসমূহৰ উৰ্দ্ধত স্পষ্ট ভাবে ফুটি ওলাইছে। বনো-বমেশ বা শ্ৰীকান্ত-বাজলক্ষ্মী আদিৰ ঘটনাই আমাৰ প্ৰেমৰ সম্পৰ্কৰ ভেটিত নব-নাৰাৰ মিনন যি বাস্তৱীয় ভাৱ মূল্যবোধ জগাই তোলে। আন হাতে 'শেষ প্ৰস্তাৱ'ৰ কমলৈ তাক ব্যৰ্থকৰে কৰি আৰু বঙোৰে বৰ্থানি আমাৰ আগত স্পষ্ট বৃপত দাঙি ধৰে। এই স্পষ্টতাৰ তুলনাত আওপকাঁয়া হাঁহুতৰ প্ৰভাৱ নহ'ওঁ বোহ।

শৰৎচন্দ্ৰৰ কথাত এটা গতিশীলতা আমি সচেতন লক্ষ্য কৰো। কবি শক্তিৰ আগচোৰাত ভাৰতত সামাজিক সংস্কাৰৰ আন্দোলনবোৰৰ কৰ্মবিপ্লৱ হৈ পূৰ্ণ পৰ্য্যায়ৰ প্ৰবন বাস্তৱিক আন্দোলনত পৰিণত হয়। 'পল্লীসমাজ'ত আমি লেখকৰ মনত সংস্কাৰৰ প্ৰয়োজনৰ ভাব প্ৰবন হৈ থকা যেন অনুভৱ কৰো। বনোৰ অনুভৱ কৰিছিল গঠনমূলক কাম কৰি আৰু সমাজৰ উন্নতি সাধি গাবৰ বিভিন্ন ধৰ্মৰ মানুহৰ উন্নতি সাধিব পৰা যায়। সমগ্ৰ ঘটনাটোৱে বৈপ্লৱিক যন্ত্ৰণা, জমিদাৰীৰ কুফল আৰু সাধাৰণ মানুহৰ স্বাভাৱিক অন্যায় প্ৰতিৰোধৰ ক্ষমতাৰ ওপৰত আলোকপাত কৰি আমাৰ চকুৰ আগত সমগ্ৰ গ্ৰাম্য সমাজখনৰ অচলতা ভাঙিবলৈ প্ৰয়াস কৰিছে। 'শ্ৰীকান্ত'ত থকা অগদাৰ্দিদ, বাজলক্ষ্মী আৰু অভয়া — এই তিনি নাৰ্হীমূৰ্ত্তিৰ যোগেদি কমে সংস্কাৰৰ হুটি,

সংস্কাৰ আৰু সলনি স্বন্দ আৰু সলনিৰ জয়ক পৰ্যায়ক্ৰমে পৰিস্ফুট কৰি নব-নাৰীৰ সম্পৰ্কৰ পৰিবৰ্তনৰ সৰল ইঙ্গিত দিছে। কিন্তু 'পথেৰ দাবী'ত অপূৰ্ণৰ দুৰ্গলতাৰ সমালোচনা কৰি তাৰ ঠাইত সবাসাচীৰ বৈপ্লৱিক পৰিবৰ্তনৰ মতধাৰা উজ্জলতৰ কৰি তুলিছে। অপূৰ্ণ ৰমেশৰ সগোষ্ঠী, 'পথেৰ দাবী'ত লেখকে ধীৰপন্থী সামাজিক স্নেহকৰ যোগেদি কিবা সলনি আহিব পাৰিব বুলি আশা কৰা নাই। কৃষক শ্ৰেণীৰ দুৰ্গলতাও তেওঁ ধৰা পেলাইছে। বনুৱা শ্ৰেণীৰ সচেতন সংগঠিত বিপ্লৱৰ যোগেদি সমাজৰ আধাৰৰ আমূল পৰিবৰ্তন সাধি যে তেওঁ সামাৰ ভেটিত সমাজ আৰু সংস্কৃতি গঢ়িব খুজিছিল সেই কথা সহজে ধৰিব পাৰি। 'শেষ প্ৰশ্ন'ৰ কমলতও ধীৰপন্থী সেৱক সকলৰ কাৰ্য্যৰ ধুকুচি সমালোচনা কৰিছে আৰু বিবাহৰ মাজত থকা অসঙ্গতি গুচাই মুক্ত প্ৰেমৰ মিলনৰ ধ্বজা উৰাইছে। ক্ষন্তকৰ বাবে ভূমুকি মৰা ৰাজেনৰ চাৰিওই আমাক সঁহাৰক বা বিশুদ্ধ বিপ্লৱৰ ইঙ্গিত দিয়ে। সি কমলৰ বিদ্ৰোহৰ সৌন্দৰ্য্যত আত্মকৰ আবিৰাম বিপ্লৱৰ গতিক মূৰ্ত্তমান কৰি তুলিছে।

কলাকাৰ ৰূপে শৰৎচন্দ্ৰৰ সফলতা তেওঁৰ অন্তৰ্ভুক্তি আৰু বিপৰীত বস্তুৰ স্বন্দৰ সমন্বয় সাধিব পৰা কম্পনা-শক্তি। তেওঁৰ কম্পনা-শক্তি সংঘত আৰু সুসঙ্গত ৰূপত যুটি উঠিছে 'গৃহদাহত'। এই কাৰণেই এই গম্পৰ আবেদন কল্পাৰ দৃষ্টিৰ পৰা নিখুত। কিন্তু এই কাহিনী মূলতঃ মধ্যমবৰ্গৰ জীৱন-বৃত্তৰ মাজত আৱদ্ধ। এই শ্ৰেণীৰ অভিজ্ঞতাত সাৰ্বজনিক সমাজ পৰিবৰ্তনৰ ইঙ্গিত বিচাৰি পোৱা টান। সেই কাৰণে অচলাই সমাজ পৰিবৰ্তনৰ ইঙ্গিত দিলেও সেই ইঙ্গিতৰ প্ৰভাৱে মানৱ-সম্পৰ্কৰ এটা দিশহে দ্ৰুই যায়। 'পল্লীসমাজ'ৰ ৰমেশে জটিল জাত-শ্ৰেণীবিভক্ত সমাজখনৰ স্বৰূপ দাঙি ধৰে, কিন্তু ই মূলতঃ হিন্দু সমাজৰ অভিজ্ঞতাৰ মাজতে আৱদ্ধ। আনহাতে 'পথেৰ দাবী' আৰু 'শেষ প্ৰশ্ন'ৰ চেটিং সমাজৰ বুকুত নহয়, সীমাস্তত। শৰৎচন্দ্ৰই বেঙুনীয়া সন্ত্ৰাসবাদী দলৰ আশ্ৰিত ডাক্তৰৰ বৈপ্লৱিক দৰ্শন প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে। আনহাতে কমলৰ মুক্ত প্ৰেমৰ দৰ্শন প্ৰকাশ হৈছে তাজমহলৰ পটভূমিত বিৰাজমান আগ্ৰাৰ প্ৰবাসী ক্ষুদ্ৰ বঙালী সমাজখনত। মধ্যবিত্ত পৰিবেশ আত্মকৰ লেখকে ইয়াত এক ভবিষ্যত সমাজৰ আদৰ্শ ৰচনা কৰিছে। 'মহেশ' গম্পটোৰ গাথনি এনেকুৱা যে তাত ভাব বা দৰ্শনৰ মাজেদি পটভূমিৰ সীমাবদ্ধতা অতিক্ৰম কৰা টান। ইয়াত লেখকে গাঁৱৰ সামগ্ৰিক জীৱনৰ সামাজিক স্বন্দক স্বাভাৱিক আৰু মৰ্মস্পৰ্শী কৰি তুলিছে। ই সাধাৰণ মানুহৰ জীৱন-সংগ্ৰামৰ এখন সাৰ্থক ছবি আমাক দিয়ে আৰু সমাজ পৰিবৰ্তনৰ এটা স্পষ্ট ইঙ্গিতো দিয়ে।

শৰৎচন্দ্ৰৰ জনপ্ৰিয়তাৰ মূলতে তেওঁৰ কলাৰ গভীৰ দায়বদ্ধতা। তেওঁ বঙালী উপন্যাসৰ সূঁতসলাওঁতা আৰু অগ্ৰণী ৰূপে বৰ্তমান কালৰ লেখকৰ অনুপ্ৰেৰণাৰ স্থল। স্বল্প দৃষ্টিৰে চালে তেওঁৰ সাধাৰণত উত্তৰকালৰ সাধক সকলে সাৰ্থক সামাজিক উপন্যাস সৃষ্টিৰ সমস্যাসমূহৰ সমাধানৰ ইঙ্গিতো পাব।

শৰৎচন্দ্ৰৰ লেখাত বহুতেই বহুত অভাৱ আৱিষ্কাৰ কৰিছে, কিন্তু তেওঁলোকে যিবিলাক বস্তু তেওঁৰ লেখাত বিচাৰে সেইবিলাক বস্তুৰ সৰহ ভাগেই হয় উপকৰণগত অথবা তেওঁৰ স্থান-কালৰ বাহিৰত কিছুমান ধাৰণা। এইবিলাক অভাৱ মৌলিক নহয়। শৰৎচন্দ্ৰৰ সাহিত্যত একমাত্ৰ গম্ভীৰই দুখীয়া খেতিয়ক শ্ৰেণীৰ প্ৰতিভা ৰূপে নায়কৰ শাৰীত স্থান পাইছে। এই চাৰিত্ৰৰ যোগেদি এনে এক জগত তেওঁ সৃষ্টি কৰিছে যি জগত হুবহু বাস্তৱ নহয়। ই এনে এখন জগত য'ত গম্ভীৰৰ দৰে পাড়িত খেতিয়কৰো বাচি থকা বা মৃত্যুক জয় কৰাৰ আশা থাকে। এই জগত সামাজিক জগতৰে প্ৰতিৰূপ, কিন্তু তাত স্থান, কাল, সংঘাত, প্ৰটৰ গতি আৰু পৰিবেশ সকলোবোৰ মিলি এখন সুকীয়া জগতৰ সৃষ্টি হৈছে। কলাকাৰ হিছাপে তেওঁ এই জগতক এক ঐক্যবোধ জাপি দিছে। বহুতে ক'ব পাৰে গম্ভীৰে কিয় বিদ্ৰোহ নকৰিলে? 'পল্লীসমাজ'ৰ ৰমাই কিয় ৰমেশক বিয়া নকৰিলে? 'শেষ প্ৰশ্ন'ৰ ৰাজেন কিয় অকালতে মৰি গ'ল? 'চাৰিওই'ৰ কিৰণময়ী কিয় পাগল হ'ল? ইত্যাদি। কিন্তু এইবিলাক প্ৰশ্ন তোলা সকলে ভাবি নেচায় যে লেখকৰ উদ্দেশ্যই আছিল হয়তো পাঠকৰ মনত এই প্ৰশ্নবোৰ জগোৱা। অৰ্থাৎ কিছুমান মূল্যবোধ জগাই তোলা। 'নন-কেথাৰটিক' উপন্যাসত উদ্দেশ্যৰ সিদ্ধি এনে দৰেই হয়। কোনো বন্ধমূল পূৰ্ণধাৰণা নোহোৱাকৈ আমি যদি এই উদ্দেশ্যৰ বিষয়ে অগত হ'ব পাৰো তেন্তে বুজিম যে শৰৎচন্দ্ৰই বিভিন্ন উপকৰণ, কাৰ্য্য আৰু চাৰিত্ৰক উপায় হিছাপে ব্যৱহাৰ কৰিছে। তেওঁৰ সৰহভাগ উপন্যাসতে বৰ্তমানৰ কুৰূপ বাস্তৱতাৰ বিসৰ্জন আৰু পুনৰ-সৃষ্টিৰ যোগেদি তাৰ সুন্দৰ ৰূপৰ আৱাহন একেলগে পোৱা। গম্ভীৰে শেহত এখন অনায়া আৰু কদাকাৰ সমাজ অস্বীকাৰ কৰি তাৰ সীমাৰ সিপাৰে থকা আন এখন চালুকীয়া সমাজত জীৱনৰ ধাৰাবাহিকতা বিচাৰি গৈছে। শিম্পীয়ে এই বিসৰ্জন আৰু আৱাহনৰ মাজেদিয়েই তেওঁৰ বিদ্ৰোহ ঘোষণা কৰিছে। ঘটনাৰ কেতিয়াবা ঠোঁজক, কেতিয়াবা কামিক, কেতিয়াবা আদৰ্শবাদী পৰিসমাপ্তিৰ মাজেদি লেখকে শেষত জীৱনৰ চৰম জয়েই ঘোষণা কৰে।

আলেক্সেয় কামুৰে একা বা সংহতিৰ ৰূপ-ৰেখাৰ ওপৰত উপন্যাসক দুভাগে ভগাইছে। এবিধৰ একাৰ গাঠনিক বাহ্যিক স্থানকাল অতিক্ৰম কৰি যোৱা আন্তৰিক বাস্তৱতাৰ ভেটিত গঢ়া। শৰৎচন্দ্ৰৰ উপন্যাসত স্থান-কালৰ বাহ্যিক জগতখনৰ স্থিতি নিম্নতম, আন্তৰিক বাস্তৱতাৰ পিনেই তেওঁৰ প্ৰবণতা অধিক। কিন্তু সূক্ষ্মভাৱে চালে দেখা যায় যে তেওঁৰ আন্তৰিক বাস্তৱতাৰ চিত্ৰনো সংযত অথবা সীমিত। স্বৰূপাৰ্থত তেওঁৰ প্ৰেমৰ উপন্যাসবোৰত দৈহিক জীৱনৰ উপস্থিতি আৰু মনৰ জীৱনৰ উপস্থিতি দুয়োটাই সংযত আৰু সীমিত। বৰীন্দ্রনাথৰ দৰে তেওঁৰ উচ্চতৰ কাব্যিক সমলয়ৰ সৃষ্টি নকৰে, সাধাৰণ প্ৰেমৰ বা হিংসাৰ উপন্যাসত কৰাৰ দৰে এটা বিমূৰ্ত, হীনতৰ দৈহিক সমলয়ো তেওঁ নিবিচাৰে। তেওঁ আকাশ আৰু মাটিৰ মাজে-মুখে থাকি এক অৰ্দ্ধদৈহিক আৰু অৰ্দ্ধমানসিক জগতৰ সৃষ্টি কৰে। আৰ্জি দুই জগত পৰস্পৰৰ পৰা আঁতৰি আহিছে। গতিকে দুৰ্য্যো দেহবাদী আৰু দুৰ্য্যোৰ অন্তৰবাদী দুয়োবিধ লেখকেই শৰৎচন্দ্ৰক সমালোচনা কৰি গৈছে। কিন্তু তাকে নকৰাৰ যদি তেওঁলোকে শৰৎচন্দ্ৰৰ কলাৰ ভাৰসাম্যবোধ আৰু সংগমৰ গুণলৈ লক্ষ্য কৰে তেন্তে তাত এটা নতুন পৰম্পৰা বিচাৰি পাব পাৰে।

শৰৎচন্দ্ৰৰ পৰা তেওঁৰ অভিজ্ঞতাৰ বাহিৰৰ বস্তু বা তেওঁৰ আয়তনৰ বাহিৰৰ কলা বিচাৰিলে একল তেওঁৰ প্ৰতিভাই যে প্ৰতিচ্ছা কৰা হ'ব এনে নহয়, আমাৰ নিৰ্ভৰা কলা বিচাৰৰ সীমাবদ্ধতা দেখাৰো হ'ব। ইতিহাসৰ পৰিপ্ৰেক্ষিতত বিচাৰ কৰিলে আমি দেখা যে তেওঁৰ বিশ্ববীক্ষা অথবা জীৱন-দৰ্শন আগ ধৰিহৰাণীক প্ৰগতিশীল, মধ্যমবৰ্গীয় চেতনাৰ ভেটিত ৰচিত। তেওঁৰ ব্যক্তিগত জীৱনত এই মধ্যমবৰ্গীয় চেতনাৰ মেৰ-ঘৰৰ পৰা ওলাই যোৱাৰ চেষ্টা যথেষ্ট, আনহাতে নগৰীয়া মধ্যবিত্ততকৈ গাঁৱীয়া অথবা গ্ৰাম্য সংস্কৃতিৰ দ্বাৰা প্ৰভাৱান্বিত মধ্যবিত্তৰ অন্তৰৰ গভীৰত সোমাই তেওঁ আৱিষ্কাৰ কৰিছিল অপূৰ্ণ নাৰী চৰিত্ৰসমূহ। এই দৃষ্টিৰ পৰা চালে মধ্যমবৰ্গীয় কলাকাৰ ৰূপেও তেওঁৰ জীৱন আৰু সংস্কৃতিৰ অভিজ্ঞতাৰ পৰিসৰ তেওঁৰ সমসাময়িক উপন্যাসিক সকলৰ তুলনাত ব্যাপকতৰ আছিল।

ভাৰতবৰ্ষৰ সাহিত্যত পূৰ্বেতে উপন্যাস নাছিল বুলিলেই হয়। সমাজ পৰিবৰ্তনৰ গতি দ্ৰুত হোৱাৰ লগে লগে কলা হিছাপে উপন্যাসৰো গুৰুত্ব বৃদ্ধি পায়। শৰৎচন্দ্ৰই পাশ্চাত্যৰ ওজস্বল অথবা ভাৰতীয় অগ্ৰজ সকলৰ পৰা উপন্যাস-কলা শিকিলেও, তেওঁ তাক নিজৰ অভিজ্ঞতাৰ প্ৰয়োজনৰ আলমত সংশোধিত কৰি লৈছিল। ঐতিহাসিক চেতনা বৃদ্ধিৰ লগে লগে মানুহে নিজক জনাৰ আৰু নিজক বাস্তৱতাৰ গতিৰ লগত আপুৰুৱাৰ বাবে নন্দনতাত্ত্বিক ক্ষেত্ৰত যি প্ৰচেষ্টা চলাইছিল, তাৰে ফল হ'ল উপন্যাস। শৰৎচন্দ্ৰৰ দৃষ্টি মানবীয়, উপন্যাসৰ দৃষ্টিও মানবীয়। ভাৰতবৰ্ষৰ সমাজৰ এটা বৈশিষ্ট্য জাতিভেদ প্ৰথা। ই মানুহৰ শ্ৰেণী সম্পৰ্ক আৰু (গৌন আদি) মানবীয় সম্পৰ্কও বিকৃত কৰিছে। শৰৎচন্দ্ৰই এই জাতিভেদ সমাজৰ গভীৰলৈ দৃষ্টি নিক্ষেপ কৰিছিল, আৰু তাৰ ভিতৰৰা অন্তৰ্ভুক্তবোধ বা নিষ্ঠুৰতাবোধ উপন্যাসত চিত্ৰিত কৰিছিল। 'বামুনেৰ মেয়ে' তাৰ উৎকৃষ্ট প্ৰমাণ। অৰ্থহীন প্ৰথা আৰু মানৱতাবিৰোধী সংস্কাৰৰ ধ্বংসাত্মক সংৰক্ষণশীল পুৰুষ-নাৰীসকলক আনি তেওঁৰ উপন্যাসত পাওঁতক। তাৰে ভিতৰত কোনো কোনো সংৰক্ষণশীল চৰিত্ৰই হিংসা আৰু নিষ্ঠুৰতাৰ আশ্ৰয় লৈছে আৰু সমাজৰ প্ৰতিক্ৰিয়াশীল শক্তিৰ লগত হাত মিলাইছে। অমদাদিদিৰ স্বামী, নায়ক আদি নিষ্ঠুৰতাৰ প্ৰতীক। আনহাতে অমদাদিদি আৰু গম্বুৰ সংৰক্ষণশীলতাৰ তড়নাত গভীৰ ভাৱে পীড়িত। বৈশ্বেশ্বৰী, ৰমা আৰু ৰাজলক্ষ্মী আদিৰ মাজত সংৰক্ষণশীলতা থকা সত্ত্বেও এটা স্বাভাৱিক মানবতাৰ আৰু উন্নতিৰ ভাব পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। আনহাতে কৰণময়ীৰ দৰে প্ৰগতিশীল নাৰীৰ মাজতো তেওঁ যেন এটা অভাৱ লক্ষ্য কৰিছে। 'শেষ প্ৰ. ৪'ৰ কমলক আকৌ তেওঁৰ নিজৰ ভাৱৰ প্ৰতিভূমিকৈ গঢ়িছে যদিও ৰাজেনৰ হতুৱাই তেওঁৰ সমালোচনাও কৰিছে। আনহাতে স্বামী-পৰিত্যাগী বেলাৰ স্বামী-নিষ্ঠুৰশীলতাৰ ওপৰত তেওঁ কঠোৰ মন্তব্য প্ৰদান কৰিছে। চৰিত্ৰাঙ্কনৰ এই বৈচিত্ৰ্যৰ মাজত এটা বৈশিষ্ট্য লক্ষ্য কৰিবলগীয়া। লেখকৰ উদ্দেশ্য হৈছে ভাৰতীয় সমাজৰ মাজত থকা সংৰক্ষণশীলতা আৰু প্ৰগতিৰ ধন্থৰ এটা সত্য ৰূপ ডাঙি পৰা। নাৰী চৰিত্ৰসমূহে এই ৰূপ উজ্জলকৈ ডাঙি ধৰিছে। শৰৎচন্দ্ৰৰ এই শিল্পদৃষ্টি উত্তৰসাধক সকলৰ বাবে প্ৰজ্ঞাৰ গুণ।

# Saratchandra's art

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya

Saratchandra's importance as an artist lies precisely in his pioneering role in the realm of Indian social novel. He chose his raw materials from society and viewed society from the standpoint of a committed artist. He had faith in the innate wisdom of the common man and this provided the motive force of the characters in his earlier novels. However, towards the end of his career he accepted the position of a conscious artist who saw the dynamic of social change in the rise of the labouring humanity. This is clear in his later novel *Pathēr Dābī*

He did not confine his experience in the narrow mould of a particular class, but broadened his range to include the whole gamut of social experience. He believed in change. He saw in sex relationship the essence of all human relationships and it is through depiction of contradictions within this relationship that he emphasised the necessity of social change. The structure of his best sex novels was non-cathartic, its effect on the minds of the readers was generally one of non-relief and this induced a feeling of necessity for urgent social change. This structure is met with in *Śrikānta* and *Pallī-Samāj*. On the other hand, in his later novels like *Pathēr Dābī* and *Śēṣ Praśna* this feeling of necessity is expressed directly within a cathartic structure. *Pallī-Samāj* induces in us a feeling of social reform and a desire for better social order only indirectly. In *Śēṣ Praśna* or *Pathēr Dābī*, it is, however, explicitly stated through dialogue.

His art was dynamic. In the first half of the twentieth century, the social reform movement gradually gave way to the radical political movement for the freedom of India. In *Pallī-Samāj*, one feels a strong impact of the social reform movement. Ramēś believed that the rural society could be revitalised through sustained social work. It further gives us insight into the author's belief in the potency of innate wisdom of the common man. In *Śrikānta*, too, this truth is revealed through the bold action of Abhavā in rejecting her unfaithful husband. But in *Pathēr Dābī* and *Śēṣ Praśna*, one finds that the major characters no longer stand by social reform but advocate a revolutionary change in the basic institutions of society. Apūrba or Haiṇdra is as good a social worker as Ramēś, but both of them are out of tune

with the revolutionary atmosphere of the two novels. Sabvasāchi no longer believes in the innate wisdom of the peasantry or the common man and their capacity for revolutionising the existing order, instead he places explicit faith in the conscious organisation of revolutionary elements. Similarly, Kamal in *Śēṣ Praśna* pleads for a conscious and fundamental change in man-woman relationship. Here Rājēn carries forward the banner of ceaseless work of social change.

As an artist, his success lies precisely in the power of harmonisation of contradictions within the social reality. He had a gift of imagination. The limited social range of the novel *Gṛhadāha* notwithstanding, this power of harmonisation is best expressed here. He balances here the opposed impulses of passion and convention in a fine manner. However, the aesthetic dimension here is more significant than the sociological dimension. It is essentially a middle class story of genuine passion and love, and thus expresses only an aspect of total social reality. In *Pallī-Samāj* we get an integrated picture of the rural society in transition but it is still confined to the orbit of Hindu social experience. As we move towards the worlds of *Śēṣ Praśna* and *Pathē, Dāhī*, we enter into the esoteric societies far removed from the basic day to day reality of Bengali life from which he mainly derived his raw materials. In these novels the desire for fundamental change is expressed mainly through dialogue and partly through idealistic action. Kamal expounds her philosophy of free love before the immigrant Bengali society of Agra, while Sabvasāchi expresses his idea of Indian revolution in the terrorist club of Rangoon. The author tried here to transcend the limits of a middle class society with an ideological sweep rare among his contemporaries. The structure of *Mahēṣ* is, however, such that here no resort to ideas would enable the writer to transcend the middle class world. So he uses the contradictions inherent within the caste-ridden rural society of Bengal to bring out the essential dynamic of social change inherent in the mind of suffering humanity. Here we get a plausible and realistic picture of the society and a suggestion for its fundamental change.

The popularity of Saratchandra is precisely due to his conscious or unconscious commitment to the basic social values. He was a pioneer among the social novelists of Bengal and has been since a source of inspiration to many.

Some critics point towards the apparent deficiencies in Saratchandra's art. But these deficiencies do not seem to be basic. Let us take some concrete examples. Gaphur of *Mahēṣ* seems to be the only major character (in the whole range of Saratchandra's literature) who belongs to the exploited labouring humanity. The story creates a closed and unified universe in which the main character survives all challenges to his existence. This world resembles the real world, but the different elements like place, time, conflict, movement of the plot, and the atmosphere get fused and unified within its contour. Oblivious of this aesthetical harmony, some may remain dissatisfied and ask for a more radical attitude or action on the part of uprooted and pauperised peasant hero. Similarly, the critics may deplore Ramā's failure to marry Ramēś in *Pallī-Samāj*. Others may resent Rājēn's almost inconsequential role in *Śēṣ Praśna*, or get hurt at Kiranmayī's sad fate in slipping into a state of madness. But the critics will be found wrong here, for the purpose of the writer was to use these disagreeable situations as means towards an end. Evidently, to ask these questions is to imply a direction of social change. This is the usual method with which a non-cathartic novel aims at creating a desirable effect on the reader's mind. The creative process in this type of novels involves simultaneous rejection of the hideous existence and affirmation of life at the aesthetic level. Gaphur rejects the sordid feudal world in which he lives, but accepts the continuity of life in the emerging incipient world. This is the way in which an artist expresses his spirit of rebellion. Some of the novels of Saratchandra have tragic ends, while others have either comic

or idealistic ends. Whatever the ends, his novels usually affirm life and its values. Life triumphs finally over death or destruction in almost all his significant novels.

Novels are of two kinds, as Albert Camus tells us. The structure of unity in the first type is external and is confined to the space-time world of everyday reality. This unity is somewhat degraded, compared to the unity that is achieved through harmonisation of opposed elements in the interior reality of human mind. In Saratchandra's novels, the space-time world of everyday world is not depicted beyond what is absolutely necessary, as his art is oriented towards the interior reality of the human mind. But he is too conscious and pragmatic an artist to yield to the temptation of producing a pure novel of interior reality. An analysis of his love stories shows that the bodily and mental elements in them are usually presented in a finely balanced manner. He does not aim at creating a higher form of poetic harmony after the manner of Rabindranath, nor does he degrade the unity to the lower level of an ordinary love or crime story. He avoids both the extremes and maintains an even course.

It is wrong to seek something from his work which he does not aim at creating or which is usually beyond his art. This will merely show the limitations of one's critical attitude. Judged in the light of history, his literary world-view seems to be moulded by the social reality of the first half of the twentieth century and it is based on the middle class consciousness. However, he constantly endeavoured to go beyond the ken of this middle class existence and had a wide knowledge of the rural life and culture. His women characters mostly belong to this milieu and they are typical. It would not be wrong to conclude that his experience of life was more varied and richer than those of his contemporaries.

Comparatively speaking, novel is a new genre in Indian literature. Its importance as an art form was recognised only when the pace of social change was faster. Saratchandra learnt his art from the Western masters as well as from his Indian predecessors, but he adapted it suitably to his needs. His outlook was humane, and he viewed the Indian society from the standpoint of a humanist. One of the characteristics of the Indian society is the caste system, and he was one of those writers who first drew our pointed attention to the evils associated with it. *Bāmunēr Mēyē* offers us a stringent criticism of these evils. A number of his characters like Nyāyaratna in *Mahēś* and the homicidal consort of Annadādidi in *Śrikānta* are conservative, and their violence and cruelties repel us. On the other hand, Biśwēśwarī, Ramā and Rājlakṣmī, etc., retain their traditional old world virtues and humanity, despite their avowed conservative outlook. The progressive characters in his novels, similarly, are not free from foibles or contradictions. Kṛaṇmavī in *Charitrahīn* seems to lack inherent strength to stand the strains of the new and unorthodox way of life. Kamal of *Śēṣ Praśna* is no doubt depicted as his alter-ego, but she lives more in the world of ideas than in the world of day-to-day reality. The author's comments on the rebellion of Bēlā against the marital injustice of her husband seem to be revealing. He opines that the divorcee is not really free as she is dependent on her former consort for her living. He was ever alert to detect the inadequacies and contradictions of the old and new living, and his specific aim in doing this was to depict the inherent conflicts in striving for a better life. His women characters reveal these conflicts in a striking manner. Saratchandra's art has thus a significance and his successors may very well learn from it the secret of selecting and using raw materials of art from the society in which they live.

# શરદ બાબુ, જરા દૂરથી

રઘુવીર ચૌધરી

ગુજરાતમાં શરદબાબુની ઝાઝી ચર્ચા થઈ નથી. માત્ર એક સમર્થ વિવેચક સ્વ. રા. વિ. પાઠકે શરદબાબુની કૃતિઓના શ્રી નગીનદાસ પારેખ કૃત અનુવાદોની પ્રસ્તાવનાઓ રૂપે આસ્વાદ કરાવેલા છે. સ્વ. મહાદેવભાઈ દેસાઈએ શરદબાબુનો ગુજરાતી વાચકને પહેલો પરિચય કરાવ્યો. એ પછી પોતાની આગવી સૃષ્ટિ ધરાવતા એક વિશિષ્ટ ભારતીય લેખક તરીકે એમની અદી પ્રતિષ્ઠા બંધાઈ. તેમ છતાં જેમનું અહીં ગંભીર વિવેચન થયું છે એવા લેખકોમાં શરદબાબુનું નામ જોવા મળતું નથી.

એ સાચું છે કે ગુજરાતી કથાવિવેચન પ્રમાણમાં પાતળું છે, પણ એ ઊંણપ પુરાય એટલું એ પ્રાણવાન અને સમજભર્યું છે. શરદબાબુની કૃતિઓના વિવેચનના સદર્ભમાં પણ આ અદ્વિતીય માટે અફમોસ કરવા જેવો નથી એક સમર્થ નવલકથાકારે બીજા—ગુજરાતના આજના સર્વોત્તમ—નવલકથાકારની કૃતિ વિશે લખતાં એવું વિધાન કરેલું કે આ નવલકથાનાં સ્ત્રી-પાત્રો પર શરદબાબુનાં સ્ત્રીપાત્રોનો પ્રભાવ છે. કોઈ પણ વાચક આ વિધાન સ્વીકારી લેવા લલચારો પણ ભાગ્યે જ એનું સમર્થન થઈ શકશે. કેમકે એ નવલકથા નખી ત્યાં સુધી તો લેખકે શરદબાબુ કે બીજા કોઈ નવલકથાકારને એ રીતે વાંચ્યા નહોતા કે એમનાં સ્ત્રી-પાત્રોનો ઉપરછંદો પ્રભાવ પણ એમના પર પડી શકે. પ્રભાવની વાત બાબુ પર ગાંધી, કોઈ ગુજરાતી નવલકથાકાર સાથેની સરખામણીના સદર્ભમાં પણ શરદબાબુનાં ઉલ્લેખ થયો નથી. ગુજરાતી સાહિત્યના વિદ્વાનોએ શરદબાબુને હાંસિયા પર નોંધવા જંટલી નિસળત પણ દાખવી નથી, જ્યારે રવીન્દ્રનાથ, મહાત્મા ગાંધીની જેમ કેન્દ્રસ્થાન ધરાવે છે.

આમ થવાનું કારણ છે ગુજરાતી વિવેચનનો મૂલ્યાભિમુખ અભિગમ. મહિમાની દૃષ્ટિએ એ જમાનો ટોચટોચનો હતો, દોસ્તોયવસ્કોનો નહીં. કેટલાક પ્રસંગોએ જીવન જતાનું. શરદબાબુ, ‘વિપ્રદાસ’ જેવી એકાદ કૃતિને બાદ કરતાં મૂલ્યાભિમુખ અભિગમથી મુક્ત રહ્યા છે. વળી, ગુજરાતી કથાવિવેચન સર્જનાત્મક લેખનમાં અનુભવની પસંદગી પરંતુ મૂલ્યનિષ્ઠ ધારણનું વર્ચસ સ્વીકારેલું હતું.



આપણા સાંસ્કૃતિક વારસા વિશે શરદાબાણુએ ક્યારેય શંકા-દષ્ટિ કરી નથી. એ તો એ યુગની અનિવાર્યતા હતી કે સાહિત્ય અને જીવન કેટલીક પરંપરાઓની સખતાઈમાંથી મુક્ત થાય. શરદાબાણુએ એ કરી બતાવ્યું. એમની કૃતિઓમાં જીવન અને મૂલ્ય એ બેમાં જીવન અગ્રતા બાગવે છે, અનુભવ અને વિચારમાં અનુભવ.

પછીના યુગમાં ગુજરાતી વિવેચને કલાની સ્વાયત્તતા સ્વીકારી છે શ્રી ઉમાશંકર જોશીએ સમર્પક રીતે કહ્યું છે કે ‘કલા પોતે જ એક જીવનમૂલ્ય છે’ નિરંજન ભગત, સુરેશ જોશી અને અન્ય વિદ્વાન લેખકોએ અમુક કૃતિઓના એમના ગંભીર અધ્યયનોમાં કલાની આણ સ્વીકારીને કૃતિનિષ્ઠ અભિગમ દાખવ્યો છે. આ સંદર્ભમાં પણ, અન્ય દારણે શરદાબાણુનો ઉદ્દેશ થયો નથી. ગુજરાતી કથાવિવેચને પશ્ચિમના સાહિત્યમાંથી નિદર્શનો પસંદ કરીને વાત કરી છે. અલબત્ત, ‘ગૃહદાસ’, ‘પથેરદાસિ’, ‘શ્રીકાન્ત’, ‘ચરિત્રલીન’ અને ‘વિપ્રદાસ’ પણ સંવિધાનગત કૃતિનિષ્ઠ વિવેચન ખમી શકે એમ છે, પણ હજી મુઠ્ઠી આધુનિક વિવેચકને એ માટે પ્રેરી શકી નથી.

ભલે એમની ચર્ચા ઝાઝી ન થઈ પણ શરદાબાણુ વંચાયા છે સર્વત્ર અને સતત. એમની પાસે એવું કશુંક છે જે ઉત્તરજી અને સામાન્ય—બંને પ્રકારના વાચકોને સ્પર્શે છે.

શરદાબાણુને કોઈ મધ્યસ્થીની—કોઈ અર્થઘટકની જરૂર નથી એમને તો નિર્વિદ્વા સવિદ્ધ ધરાવતો વાચક જોઈએ, વળગળ વિનાના સરળ મનુષ્ય જોઈએ એ એક ભારે આશ્ચર્યની વાત છે કે જ્યાં અસખ્ય વળગળોનું વર્ચસ છે એવા એક ભારતીય પ્રદેશમાં શરદાબાણુ વિપુલ વાચકો ધરાવે છે આ દારણે તો વીસેક વર્ષ પહેલાં શરદાબાણુની જીવ્વીસ અનુવાદિત કૃતિઓ પાંચ ખંડની ક્રિયાત આવૃત્તિ દ્વારા મુક્ત થઈ હતી એ પહેલાં પણ ત્રણચાર અનુવાદકોએ એમની કેટલીક નવજકથાઓના અનુવાદ કર્યા હતા ક્યારેક તો એમણે મૂળ એક જ કૃતિને ગુજરાતીમાં જુદા જુદા નામે ઉતારી હતી. વાચકોના શરદાબાણુ માટેના પ્રેમનો ઉપયોગ કરતાં કરતાં પ્રકાશકો દ્વારા સાહિત્યની એવા પણ થઈ ગઈ છે

શરદાબાણુની કથાઓનાં નાટ્યરૂપાન્તરો ઘણા સમય પહેલાં અહીં ભજવાયેલાં કેટલીક વિદ્યાપ્રીય સરથાઓએ એકથી વધુ વાર શરદ-સમાદ્ જોઈયાં છે. આ શતાબ્દી-વર્ષ નિમિત્તે ગુજરાતી દૈનિકોએ શરદાબાણુના જીવન અને સાહિત્ય વિશે લેખો આપવા માંડ્યા છે. આ બધું એ સૂચવવા પૂરતું છે કે ભલે દૂર રહ્યા પણ ગુજરાત માટે શરદાબાણુ ખીલત કોઈ ગુજરાતી લેખક જેટલા જ પોતાના છે

ગુજરાતી વાચકને શરદાબાણુનાં પાત્રો કંઈક જુદા જ લોકોનાં લાગે છે. આ અંતરે પણ કદાચ એમનું આકર્ષણ વધાર્યું છે. ઘણી ભારતીય ભાષાઓમાં દેવદાસ વિશે કાવ્યો લખાયેલાં છે એથા દાયકાના એક જાણીતા ગુજરાતી કવિએ પાર્વતી વિશે કાવ્યો લખ્યું છે. અસર અનુભવ્યા પછી જે લોકો લખી શક્યા નથી એ રજા છે ગુજરાતમાં દેવદાસ કરતાં પારવતીનું પાત્ર વધુ પ્રભાવક નીવડ્યું છે. એ ભલે જન્મથી ગુજરાતી ન હોય પણ દેવદાસનો મિત્તજ તો તદ્દન પ્રતિ-ગુજરાતી જ છે.

સરસ્વતીચંદ્રથી શરૂ કરીને ઘણા ગુજરાતી કથાનાયકોએ ઘર છોડ્યું છે પણ ચાક્કસ હેતુથી, દેવદાસની જેમ આત્મનાશ માટે નહીં, પોતાના સમાજ માટે કશુંક સર્જવા માટે ક્યારેક સામાજિક હેતુ આધ્યાત્મિક વળાંક લે છે તો ક્યારેક એ તાત્વિક ધાર ધારણ કરે છે. આ બધાં તરવો પણ કોષ્ટકને શરદાબાણુમાં દેખાય પણ એમનું કથાસાહિત્ય સ્ત્રીની વેદના, નિયતિ અને એના આંતરિક સૌન્દર્યથી એવું જવાયેલું છે કે ખીલું ઘણું બધું ગોળ બની ગય છે. શરદાબાણુ સરેરાશ

જીવનથી મોટે ભાગે વાંકા ચાલે છે. માત્ર ‘વિપ્રદાસ’ અને ‘પથેરદાસિ’ના સવ્યસાચી ગુજરાતી ધારણે સંમાનનીય દરજે. આ સંદર્ભમાં કહી શકાય કે પોતાના વાતાવરણમાં શ્વસતા ગુજરાતી લેખક માટે શરદાબાણુની અસરમાં આવવું મુશ્કેલ છે. આમ છતાં એક ભારે આશાસ્પદ નવકવિ રાવજી પટેલે એની નવલકથા ‘ઝંઝા’ના ઉત્તરાર્ધમાં શરદાબાણુની રંગ પકડીને એક સ્ત્રી પાત્રનું આલેખન કર્યું છે. લોકપ્રિય નવલકથાકાર શ્રી શિવકુમાર જોશીએ શરદાબાણુ અને એમના વાતાવરણની નજીક રહીને પોતાની નવલકથાઓ અને નાટકોમાં સારાં એવાં પાત્રાંકનો આપ્યાં છે.

ગુજરાતી વિવેચન શરદાબાણુની લાગણીશીલતામાં લાગણીવેડા બુઝે એ શક્ય છે. પણ જેમણે માત્ર મનોરંજન માટે એમનું વાચન કર્યું નથી એ જાણે છે કે શરદાબાણુ પાસે એક વિરલ સંવેદનશીલતા છે. એમાં ઊંડાણ છે, પરિમાણ છે. આ સંવેદનશીલતા સમજરૂપે વિકસે છે અને અતે ઉદાપણમાં પરિણમે છે આ દૃષ્ટિએ ‘ગૃહદાદ’ એક અનન્ય નવલકથા છે. એમાં સંબંધનો પ્રશ્ન વ્યાપક સંદર્ભમાં નિરૂપાયો છે. એમાં વર્તનરૂપે જોવાયેલું જીવન છે, વરણીનું સ્વાતંત્ર્ય છે તો સમજરૂપે વિકસી રહેલું આંતરિક જીવનસરવ પણ છે. એના કલાસ્વરૂપની વાત કરીએ તો, ત્રણ માનવ-અસ્તિત્વનની ક્રિયા અને પ્રતિક્રિયામાંથી સર્જાતો ચૈતસિક આલેખ એનું સંઘટન-સૂત્ર બને છે. આ કારણે ધણા નવ-વિવેચકોને ‘ગૃહદાદ’ આકર્ષ્યા છે.

શરદાબાણુના સાહિત્યમાં જ્યાં સંવિધાનની એકતા કે સ્વરૂપની અખંડિતતા વરતાતી નથી ત્યાં પણ જીવનના ઝખકારા તો છે જ. શરદાબાણુને સંવાદોનો શોખ છે. સંવાદના આધિક્યથી ક્રિયાની ઊભાપ સાલે છે પણ એમનાં પાત્રો એમની અવિરત ગતિ દ્વારા આ ખાટ ભરપાછ કરી આપે છે. ક્યારેક આ ગતિ અકારણ ભેગા છતાં મોહક લાગે છે કેમ કે એ અજાણી દિશામાં હોય છે. ‘ચરિત્રદીપ’ની કિરણમયી એના અજાત ભાવી ભણી એકદમ ધસી જાય છે. છેવટે એનું દરેક પગલું પ્રસ્તુત બને છે અને લેખકની પૂર્વયાજનાનો અવિચ્છિન્ન અંશ લાગે છે. અહીં વાચકનો રસ જળવાય છે એની ગતિના અબુધાયાં વળાંકોને લીધે. અનિશ્ચિતતાઓની અભિવ્યક્તિના શરદાબાણુ સ્વામી હતા આ પ્રક્રિયા દરમિયાન વાચક ઝેનરાવાનું પસંદ કરે છે, માણે છે. એ પોતાનો વિશ્વાસ સમર્પીને એમને અનુસરે છે.

શરદાબાણુની ઔદ્ધિક કક્ષા વિશે અભિપ્રાય બાંધવા માટે ‘શેષપ્રશ્ન’ની કમલ સુધી જવાની જરૂર નથી એમણે નાની ઉંમરે ઘણુંબધું ગુમાવ્યું અને આવી પડેલા અનુભવો દ્વારા એ પુનઃ પ્રાપ્ત કર્યું. એ વાસી ખાલોના નહીં પણ તાઝા અનુભવોના માણસ હતા. એમનાં પાત્રો પોતાની રીતે વર્તે છે અને વાત કરે છે. કોઈ યુક્તિમાર લેખકની ગાંઠવાળીનું એ પરિણામ નથી. એ પોતાના સમયમાં અને સમય માટે જીવે છે. માનવજનિ માટે એમને પ્રસ્તુત બનાવનાર તરવ છે એમની યાતના---એમની વેદના. શરદાબાણુના પાત્ર રૂપે પાપી પણ આકર્ષક બની જાય છે કેમકે એ એક આવેગથી સજ્જ કરે છે. ‘ગૃહદાદ’નો મહિમ કહે છે : ‘અચલા, માદું દુઃખ પામ્યા સિવાય કદી કોઈ મોટી વસ્તુ પ્રાપ્ત કરી શકાતી નથી.’ આ કોઈ ઔદ્ધિક ચૂકાદો નથી, પણ વેદનાની પ્રક્રિયાનું પરિણામ છે, જેમાં પ્રેમ બધી યાતનાઓને ‘આથમાં લઇ લે છે અને અતે વરદાનનું રૂપ ધારણ કરે છે. પાત્રો માટે નહિ તો વાચકો માટે તો આ સાચું હશે જ છે. એક ભારતીય ઔદ્ધિક તરીકે શરદાબાણુ શું સમજે છે એનો જવાબ આ છે. એ વેદનાને પામે છે, એના અર્થ અને મૂલ્યને પ્રકાશે છે અને એમની કલા એનું વરદાનમાં રૂપાન્તર કરે છે.

# Saratchandra at a distance

Raghuveer Chaudhari

Saratchandra is not much discussed in Gujarat. Only one eminent critic Ramnarayana Pathak has written appreciation by way of introductions to Nagindas Parekh's translations of some of Saratchandra's works. It was Mahadev Desai who introduced him first to the Gujarati reading public. Since then he had a reputation as one of the most outstanding Indian writers who had conjured a world of his own. But his name was not to be found amongst those Indian authors to whom serious criticism was devoted in Gujarati.

It is true that criticism of fiction in Gujarati is comparatively meagre, but its meagreness is compensated by its vitality and preceptiveness. In the context of criticism of Saratchandra's works, the meagreness is not much to be regretted. One eminent novelist, while reviewing a novel by another novelist, who is the most outstanding living novelist in Gujarati at the moment, made a statement that the female characters in the novel were influenced by Saratchandra's women. Any reader is likely to be tempted to accept it. But the statement can hardly be substantiated, for the novelist, till he wrote the novel under review, had not even read Saratchandra or for that matter any other novelist so that his female characters could even superficially be influenced. He had created his characters out of his own memories and experiences. Let alone the question of influence, Saratchandra was not even referred to by way of comparison with any Gujarati novelist. The literary scholars in Gujarat have not shown their concern for Saratchandra, even by mentioning him marginally, whereas Rabindranath, like Mahatma Gandhi, enjoys a pivotal place.

This state of affairs can be explained only by the fact that Gujarati criticism was till then value-oriented. It was an age which could adore the Tolstoyan novel rather than the Dostoyevsky type. Life was viewed as certain projection. Saratchandra was free from value-oriented approach to literature, except in one novel *Bipradās*. All along, criticism of Gujarati fiction upheld that selection of an experience in creative writing was governed by value-judgement.

Saratchandra never questioned our cultural heritage. But it was the need of his time to liberate both life and literature from the rigours of certain traditions. Saratchandra fulfilled it. In his works life precedes values, experience thinking.

Later on Gujarati criticism accepted what Umashanker Joshi very aptly stated : 'Art itself is a life-value'. Niranjan Bhagat, Suresh Joshi, and others, through their in-depth studies of individual works, looked upon art as an end in itself. In this context also Saratchandra, for a different reason, is not referred to. In Gujarati criticism of fiction some point of view used to be illustrated mostly by literary works from the West. Of course, *Gṛhadāha*, *Pathēr Dābī*, *Śrīkānta*, *Charitrahīn*, and even *Bipradās* could stand upto structural criticism. Still, however, they have not been able to inspire the modern critic.

Saratchandra is not much discussed, although he has been read throughout. He has something to offer to both the high-brow and the low-brow.

Saratchandra does not need an interpreter. He needs an unconditioned reader, a simple human being without any inhibition. It is a matter of great surprise that in that part of India which suffers from innumerable inhibitions, Saratchandra enjoys an enormous audience. This is why twenty years ago translations of twentysix works of Saratchandra were published in low priced five volume edition. Even before that about half a dozen translators had already translated some of his novels. They gave at times different titles to the same novel. The publishers exploited the readers' love for Saratchandra, incidentally serving the cause of literature.

Dramatic versions of Saratchandra's novels have been staged long ago. Some academic institutions have more than once celebrated 'Sarat Saptah'. Gujarati dailies, on the occasion of Sarat centenary, have devoted their columns to Saratchandra and his literature. This amply reveals that Saratchandra, like any Gujarati writer, belongs to Gujarat, though he is at a distance.

For a Gujarati reader Saratchandra's characters possess a different blood group. This difference may be an extra reason for their attraction. There are poems on Dēbdās in many Indian languages. A well-known Gujarati poet of the thirties has written a long poem on Pārbatī. Being moved, those who have not been able to create, have cried. Pārbatī enjoys a greater appeal than Dēbdās in Gujarat. She may be non-Gujarati by birth, but Dēbdās is anti-Gujarati in spirit.

Beginning with Saraswati Chandra, many Gujarati heroes have left their homes, but with a purpose ; not for self-destruction like Dēbdās, but for creating something for their society. Sometimes social purpose turns out to be spiritual, sometimes it attains a philosophical edge. One may discover all these elements in Saratchandra. But his fiction is overcast by women's sufferings, destiny, and inner beauty. Mostly he deviates from normal life. Only *Bipradās*, and *Sabyasāchī* of *Pathēr Dābī* are honourable by Gujarati standards. In this context it may be stated that for a Gujarati writer who breathes in his own environment it is difficult to be influenced by Saratchandra. However, a very promising young poet, Ravaji Patel, has characterised a female in the later part of his novel *Zanzā* in Saratchandra's vein. A very popular writer Shivakumar Joshi has given many character sketches approximating Saratchandra and his environment in his novels and plays.

Saratchandra's sensitiveness may be recognized as sentimentalism as Gujarati criticism understands it. But those who have read Saratchandra, not just for story interest, are aware of his sensibility of a rare quality. It has depth and dimensions. This sensibility grows into understanding and ultimately turns into wisdom. *Gṛhadāha* is a unique novel where problem of relationship is depicted in a total context. Life seen through behaviour, freedom of choice, and the inner life that grows into understanding are all there. As far as its form is concerned, a psychological curve created by actions and reactions of three human beings becomes an organizing principle. For this very reason *Gṛhadāha* has attracted many young Gujarati critics.

In Saratchandra's writings, where structural unity or organic form is absent, one may feel flashes of life. Saratchandra is fond of dialogues, hence their abundance leading to lack of action but his characters compensate for this lack by their continuous movement. Sometimes the movement is meaningless, even though charming, because it has unknown dimension. Kīrtimayī of *Charitrahin* rushes headlong to her unknown future. At last every action of hers becomes significant and an integral part of the plan, but the reader's interest is sustained by its meandering mazes. Saratchandra was a master in expressing uncertainties. During the process the reader enjoys to be deceived. He places his faith in Saratchandra and follows him.

It is not necessary to go up to Kamal of *Śēṣ Prasna* to discover Saratchandra's intellect. He lost so much in his early age and regained it through choiceless experiences. He was not a man of second hand ideas; he was a man of first-hand experiences. His characters speak and act as themselves. They are not manoeuvred by a tricky writer. They live in their time and for their time. What makes them relevant to humanity is their suffering. A sinner becomes attractive as a Sarat character because he suffers passionately. Mahim of *Gṛhadāha* says: 'Achalā no great thing is achieved without a great suffering'. This is not an intellectual judgement but an outcome of a process of suffering, in which love brackets all miseries and ultimately it is transformed into blessing for the readers, if not for the character. This is what Saratchandra, as an Indian intellectual, understands. He understands suffering and reveals its meaning and value, and his art transforms it into a blessing.

# ગુહદાસ

ઉમાશંકર જોશી

૧૯૨૦માં જ્યારે શરતચંદ્રની સર્જક પ્રતિભા મોઝે કળાએ હતી ત્યારે 'ગુહદાસ'ની રચના થઈ. આ નવલકથા લખવી અઘરી હતી આ અગાઉ, કહેવાતી 'પતિત' નારી રાજલક્ષ્મી જેનામાં ઉત્કૃષ્ટ સ્ત્રી-ગુણો પ્રગટ થતા હતા—તેનું આલેખન એ કરી ચૂક્યા હતા. અભયા એમણે નિર્મી હતી, જે 'અદાદુર્ગપૂર્વક' છેક 'અન્નદેશ' સુધી પોતાના પતિની બાળ મેળવવા માટે પ્રવાસ ખેડે છે પણ જ્યારે એને એની સાથે જિન્દગી ગુજારવી અશક્ય લાગે છે ત્યારે એની જોડે એને જરૂરી રાખનાર 'વવાહ-મંત્રોની' એ સરિયામ અવગણના કરે છે અને પોતાની સાથે મદદ માટે રોહિણીબાબુને લઈ આવી હતી તેની સાથે નવા જીવનનો આરંભ કરે છે. ત્રણ વરસ પહેલાં એમણે એક ખાલકા શીર્ષકવાળી એક જાહેર ચર્ચાસ્પદ નવલકથા 'ચરિત્રહીન' લખી હતી, જે ગાંધીજીની ચારિત્ર્યહીનતાનો જાણે કે પુરસ્કાર કરતી ન હોય. પણ એક અન્ય ન સંવેદનશીલ અને બુદ્ધિમતી તરૂણી અચ્છાનું આલેખન કરવું—એ જોને પરજીવા ચાહે છે તે મહિમનો વંદોળિયા જેવો ભિન્ન સુરેશ ઉત્કટભાવે તેનું સવનન કરે, ખીમારીમાંથી ઉઠેલા પોતાના પતિને એ હવાકેર માટે રેલ ગાડીથી જામલપુર લઈ જતી હોય ત્યારે અધવચ્ચે સુરેશ એને દગાખોરીથી જાગાડી જાય, અંતે એ એની પત્ની તરીકે રહેવા—એની શય્યાસગિની ખનવા પ્રેરાય. આ 'અધુ' આલેખવું—એ ન તો કલાનિર્માણી, ન તો ન જોને ગળે કિનારવાની દૃષ્ટિએ, સહેલું હતું.

છેવટે તો, અગાઉની નવલકથા 'ચરિત્રહીન'નો નાયક સતીશ એટલો ચારિત્ર્યવિહોળો ન હતો ; વધુ તો એ એના અંધારા ઓરડામાં સાવિત્રી સાથે એને એકવાર છાત્રાવાસના જુવાન મિત્રોએ અને ખીજ વખતે એના આદરણીય મુરખખી મિત્ર ઉપેન્દ્ર અને એની પત્ની મુરખાબાએ જોયો એ ઉપરથી જન્મેલી ગેરસમજનો શિકાર હતો. સાવિત્રીને પણ ચરિત્રહીન કહી શકાય નહીં એ વિશેષણ કોઈને ચોંટી શકે એવું હોય તો તે એક કિરળુમયીને તે પૈસા ખાતર ડોક્ટરને પોતાની જાત સમર્પે છે—અને ઉપેન્દ્ર માટે, જિન્દગીમાં પહેલીવાર, એ પ્રેમ અનુભવે છે ત્યારે એને (ડોક્ટરને) હડધૂત કરે છે. ફરી, ઉપેન્દ્ર પર કિન્નો લેવા એના ભત્રીજા દિવાકરને એ કુમારો ચલાવે છે. આ અંધાનો માનસિક બાજુ ઉઠાવવાનું ઔદ્ધિક રીતે અલ્પવતી એવી એ નારીને માટે પણ મુશ્કેલ નીવડે છે અને એ મગજની સમતુલા ગુમાવી ખેંચે છે. એ નથી તો સાવિત્રીની જેવો પ્રેમ કરી શકતી, નથી સુરખાબાએ એને જેની દીક્ષા આપી હતી તે જીવનભરની નિઃશબ્દી પતિભક્તિના પરંપરાપ્રાપ્ત આદર્શને વળગી રહી શકતી. અને પોતાની ચારે કોર એ વિનાશજ વિનાશ જુએ છે. સાથે પોતાનોય તે સાવિત્રીનો

પ્રેમ આપી છૂટવામાં સમજે છે અને એનામાં નવું નિર્માણ કરવાનો ગુણ છે આ રીતે જોતાં ‘ચરિત્રહીન’ કથાના કિરણમયીના અંશે કેટલાક વિવેચકોને લાગે છે એવા વધારાના નથી પણ સમગ્રના અર્થવર્તાને ઉપકારક એવા સુસંગત છે. કિરણમયી એના સૌ પરિચિતોને મન વિરલ સૌન્દર્યવતી છે, પંડિતા છે, તેમ છતાં એ તેઓની સદાનુભૂતિ મેળવવામાં નિષ્ફળ નીવડે છે, નવલકથાના વાચકોની હૃદયો મેળવવામાં તે તૈયાર વિશેષ.

અચલા દુઃખદરીતે રમ્તો ચૂકે છે અને અનિવાર્ય લાગે એવા પ્રસંગોના વહેણમાં ખેંચાતી એવી ગતિવિધિ પામે છે કે એની પોતાની આંખમાં જ ચરિત્રહીન લાગે—એ, એના પોતાના શબ્દોમાં, ‘આત્મહત્યા કરી ખેંચી’ છે—એટલે કે પોતાની અદર જે કંઈ ઉત્તમ હતું તેના એણે નાશ કર્યો છે. પણ કથાના કોઈ પણ ગિદુએ એ ખીન્નઓની સદાનુભૂતિ ગુમાવતી નથી—એ શી રીતે ? હા, અંતભાગમાં અપવાદરૂપે કોઈ નહીં ને (ભારે વિધિવક્તા કે) એની ઉપર ‘પિતા’ તરીકે વારી વારી જતા રામચાણુ એના હોઠ કરે છે— અને એમાં પરંપરાપ્રાપ્ત સદગુણનું બરડાણું પણ હતું થઈ જાય છે. ‘ગૃહદાહ’ના વાચકો નુરેશના વર્તનથી વારંવાર આંચકો અનુભવે છે, જેમ અચલા સ્વયં અનુભવે છે, પણ અચલા પ્રત્યેનો સમભાવ સતત ટકી રહે છે. અચલા માનવ-વ્યવહારના શા સત્યને સાકાર કરે છે ?

શરતચંદ્રે વારંવાર ખૂબ સ્પષ્ટ કર્યું છે કે એમનાં સંખ્યાબંધ સ્ત્રીપાત્રોને સચ્ચરિત્ર, પ્રેમનિષ્ઠા, સતીત્વ અંગે ઉચ્ચગ્રાહ છે. તેની પાછળ મુખ્યત્વે પરંપરાપ્રાપ્ત મૂલ્યો—કે હિંદુ ધર્મ પણ—કારણભૂત છે એવું નથી. વિરાજવાડું શાંત ગૌરવપૂર્વક પતિગૃહ તજે છે, અને અન્નદાદિદિ પતિએ ધર્મ અદ્યો છે—એ હિંદુ મલ્લો છે છતાં તેની સાથે ભાગી જવા પિતાનું ગૃહ છોડે છે શરતચંદ્રની નારીઓને પડી હોય તો તે એકમાત્ર ‘હૃદયનું જેને અનુભવે છે તે ધર્મ’ (હૃદયેન અમ્યનુજ્ઞાતઃ યઃ ધર્મઃ) અંગે. ‘રામની સુબુદ્ધિ’માં નારાયણીને એની મા યાદ કરાવે છે કે એને કરી ધરમાં પ્રવેશ આપવામાં પોતે પતિ આગળ લીધેલી—એને હૃદયમાં પોતાથી દૂર રાખવા અંગેની—પ્રતિજ્ઞાનો ભંગ થઈ રહ્યો છે. નારાયણી એને ચિંતા ન કરવા કહે છે, પોતે એ વાતનો વિચાર કર્યો છે એમ જણાવીને હકીકતમાં પતિ આગળ આ બાબતનો ઉલ્લેખ સરખો કરવાની એને જરૂર જણાતી નથી. એ તો એને હૃદયની લાગણીના સત્યનો પોતાને અચૂક ઇત્યાદિ છે તેની ઉપર મુસ્તાક છે. ‘પંડિત મશાય’માં કુતુમ જ્યારે જાણે છે કે ચરણ ગંભીર ખીખારીમાં છે ત્યારે મન સાથે કહે છે : ‘મારું બીતર પોકારે છે કે હું જઈને એમની મેવા કરું તે ન ખોટું હોય.’ ષોડશી કલંકિની ગણાવાનું, ભૈરવીપદ ગુમાવવાનું અને સમાજગાથ થવાનું પસંદ કરે છે કોણ એને કરજ પાડનારું છે ? માત્ર એની લાગણીની સચ્ચાઈ. સાવિત્રી તો જે માણસને પોતે પ્રાણપણે અને નિઃસ્વાર્થભાવે ચાહે છે તેનું રક્ષણ કરવા માટે પોતાને અંગે પ્રચલિત જૂઠાણાને ટેકો આપવા મુખી જાય છે.

આવા બધા દાખલાઓમાં જોઈ શકાય છે કે ધર્મ (સદ-વર્તન)ની ખોજ પ્રિયજન માટે સહન કરવાની અને આત્મ-ભાગ આપવાની જિંદગી સાધાર જનની હોય છે અને ભયંકર વીખાઈ ગયેલી જિન્દગીઓમાં વ્યવસ્થા અને સંવાદિતા પુનઃ સ્થાપવામાં પરિણમતી હોય છે.

અચલા આ જનની કશી સિદ્ધિ મેળવવાથી ઘણી ઘણી દૂર છે. ખરેખર તો, વાર્તા ઉપર પડેલા પંડે છે ત્યારે બધું બેદાનબેદાન થઈ ગયેલું જોવા મળે છે. અને પોતાને લાગે વળગે છે ત્યાં સુધી, એ પોતે તો જાણે યાતના-લોકના કેન્દ્રમાં ખડી ન હોય. અને એ પોતે બરોબર જાણે છે કે એ દશા માટે એણે ખીન્ન કોઈ કરતાં ખુદ પોતાનો જ આભાર માનવાનો રહે છે. તેથી તો એ વસ્તુને વધુ ન ગૂંચવવા સુરેશ સાથેના પોતાના સંબંધના જૂઠાણા આગળ ચલાવીને એની વિધિસરની પત્ની તરીકે એની ચિંતા સળગાવવા ઇન્કાર કરે છે, અને પછી મહિમને પૂછે છે કે વિલાયતમાં હોય છે એવા સ્ત્રીઓ માટેના કોઈ આશ્રમમાં પોતાને જગા મળે કે કેમ.

કેટલાકો માને છે એમ કેવળ બ્રાહ્મસમાજીઓને ઉતારી પાડવા માટે શરતચંદ્રે એ સમાજમાંથી નાયિકા ઉપાડી ન હતી. એમ કરવા પાછળ એમને કળા અંગેનું કારણ હતું. એમને એવી નાયિકા જોઈતી હતી જે ભલેને માતાના થોડા સંસ્કાર ટક્યા હોય એથી બધાં હિંદુપરંપરાના મૂલ્યો ખાંખેરી શકી ન હોય છતાં પ્રમાણમાં સ્વતંત્રપણે પોતાની જીવનરીતિ પસંદ કરે અને પોતાના બાહ્ય તેમજ આંતર જીવન અંગેના પાયાના નિર્ણયો લે એવી હોય. એ સ્વતંત્રતાનો અમલ કરવા માટેની બૌદ્ધિક સંજ્ઞતા ધરાવનારી એને લેખકે નિરૂપી છે. વળી, જંને એ પરણવા ધાવે છે તે મહિમ એવા નિખાલસ અને ખુલ્લા સ્વભાવનાં માણસ છે કે દુનિયાભરની સ્વતંત્રતા એના ચરણોમાં ધરી દે.

‘ગૃહદાહ’માં પ્રશ્ન છે તે આ છે : દરેક મહત્વના પ્રસંગે પોતાની લાગણીના સત્ય સાથે સંવાદી હોય એ રીતે અચલા પોતાની સ્વતંત્રતાનો ઉપયોગ કરે છે ? એનાં મહત્વનાં કાર્યોને હમેશાં એના હૃદયનું અનુમોદન હોય છે !

કિરણમયી જન્વી એ છડેચોક આનીતંત્રી સાથે સંબંધ બાંધનારી નથી. નથી એ પાછળની કૃતિ ‘શોષક પ્રશ્ન’ની કમલક્ષી જેમ, લગભગ એક સિદ્ધાન્ત તરીકે, નરી સહજવૃત્તિ પર ઇત્યાદિ રાખીને વર્તનારી અચલાના પ્રતિભાવો વધારે સંકુલ પ્રકૃતિમાંથી ઊઠતા હોય છે અને ઘણાખરા દાખલાઓમાં તે કાણ પૂગતા તો મનોવૈજ્ઞાનિક અને પરિસ્થિતિવિષયક તત્વોના આધારબળે પ્રતીતિકારક હોય છે.

જે એના વ્યક્તિત્વ ઉપર સુરેશ જંવેા બેકામ્પ અનામંત્રિત અનિશ્ચિ સહેલાઈથી આક્રમણ કરી ગય છે એવું લાગે તો લેખકે સૂક્ષ્મ રીતે જે સૂચવવા પ્રયત્ન કર્યો છે તે ધ્યાનમાં રાખવાની જરૂર છે કે અચલાની ચેતનામાં સુરેશ ભરેલો પશો હતો, મહિમ સાથેની વાતોમાંથી એ એને વિશે જાણતી હતી કે એણે મહિમનો ગન એ વાર ગચાવેલો, બ્રાહ્મ છાકરી સાથે મહિમ પરણે તેની એ વિરુદ્ધ હતો, વગેરે. આથી જ્યારે સુરેશ પોતાના મિત્ર અંગે એની આગળ જંમતેમ ખોલતા માટ લાથ જોડીને માફી માગે છે ત્યારે એ પળવાર એના લાથ પકડી લે છે અને તગત છાંટી દે છે એના ઉછંગને આ અનુરૂપ હતું. વળી જ્યારે એ એને એકલા—મહિમના સંગાથમાં જ નહીં—મગવા આવવા પ્રોત્સાહન આપતી જળાય છે ત્યારે એને આશય એટલો જ હોવા સંભવ છે કે પોતાને (અચલાને) ‘ગચાવવા’ માટે મિત્ર વિશે ઘટ્ટથી વાતો કરવામાં એ કુંઠા અનુભવે નહીં. એ એટલી બુદ્ધિમતી છે જે કે સુરેશમાં ગંદા પશુને ઓગળી કાઢવામાં એ જરીકે સમય ગુમાવતી નથી. એને એ અસહિષ્ણુ ભાષામાં જળાવી દે છે કે મહિમ સાથે પોતાનું લગ્ન થવા ન પામે તો પણ એની સાથે પરણવાનો તો પોતાનો ખ્યાલ જ નથી. એની વિધિવક્ત્રતા સમજવાની વૃત્તિ એ હકીકતની નોંધ લે છે કે પિતાએ સુરેશના પૈસાની મદદથી એમની સમગ્ર ઉકેલી પણ ની પોતાની સમગ્ર વધુ ગૃંચવાઈ સુરેશનાં આંસુ લૂછતાં એને એ એટલો જ સધિયારો આપે છે કે પિતાજીના વચનનું તો હું ઉલ્લંઘન કરતી નથી. પણ પોતાની વતી એ કશો કોલ આપતી નથી. પછી એ વહેલામાં વહેલી તક તડપીને મહિમને આજીજી કરે છે કે મને આ તમાગ કસાઈ મિત્રના લાથે પડતી ગચાવો અને એના લાથની આંગળીએ પોતાની મોનાની ચીટી પહેરાવે છે. હાપણ ભરી વસ્તુઓ છે આ બધી પણ સુરેશમાંથી પોતાની જાતને દેખાતી રીતે એણે ગિરકુલ ઉતરડી કાઢી છે અને એનાથી અગળી ગતી છે ત્યારે પણ એ એની સાથે એના અચાનક બેટો થયાં તે પહેલાં જે યુવતી હતી તે હવે ગહેવા પામી નથી.

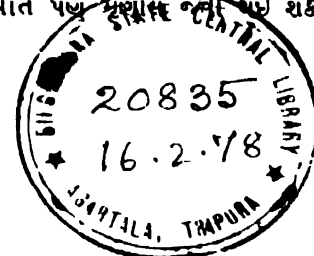
સુરેશ અંગેની સ્થૂળતાઓ એ પકડી પાડે છે તે સમજે જ પોતે એની તરફ આકર્ષાઈ ગઈ છે એવું અનુભવી રહે છે. સુરેશમાં કાંઈક એવું છે જે એને આની સાથે વધુને વધુ સંડાવે છે અને એનામાં લાગણી વિષયક અપેક્ષાઓ જગવીને વધુને વધુ સાહસિક ભાગણીઓ કરવા એને ઉત્તેજે છે—જે ઉત્તેજનાની એને બીજાંથી જરૂર હોય તો. લેખકે એને માતા-વિહોળી તરુણી તરીકે પ્રસ્તુત કરી છે. નથી કુટુંબમાં એને કોઈ સલાહ આપનારું, નથી કોઈ વાતનો વિસામાં, એકાદ મિત્ર



પણ. એની આર્થિક ભૂમિકા સામાન્ય કોટિની છે પિતાની જેમ એ લોભી નથી, પણ સુરેશ પૈસાપાત્ર છે એ વસ્તુની નોંધ એણે પણ લીધેલી છે. પાછળથી જ્યેષ્ઠપુર જવા પ્રસંગે પ્રથમ વર્ગના ડયાની મુસાફરીના ખોટા ખર્ચા સામે એ દલીલ કરે છે, પણ આસાયેશભર્યા જીવન અંગે એને નજર છે ડિહરીમાં રામબાબુને ઘેર વિક્ટોરિયામાંથી એ સોના ને ઝવેરાતથી લદાયેલી ઊતરે છે મુરેશની ખીલ્લોને જ્યાંયવામાં જન જનખમમાં મુકવાની 'મહાન'તા એને સ્પર્શી જાય છે જાપામાં એ વાંચે છે કે એક ખીમાર સ્ત્રીને જ્યાંયવા માટે તેણે આગમાં જ'પલાવ્યું હતું અને પોતે દાઝ્યો હતો, ત્યારે એ 'આપણા સુરેશબાબુ' વિશેના આ સમાચાર ઝટઝટ પિતાજીને સંભળાવે છે પોતાને નિમિત્તે સુરેશને જે નાસીપાસી અનુભવવી પડી તેના પ્રત્યાઘાતરૂપે એ આવા માર્ગે ચઢી ગયાં એમ માનવામાં એને આનંદ આવે છે. ત્યાં સુરેશ આવીને હાજર થાય છે, કેદારબાબુને પગે લાગવા જતાં એનો પાટો ઢીલો પડી ખસી જાય છે, જે અચલા કાળજીથી ઠીક રીતે ફરી ખાંધી આપે છે. મલિમનાં ને એનાં લગ્ન એને ત્યાં થાય તે અગાઉ પોતાને ઘેર આવવા બંનેને એ નિમંત્રણ આપે છે. સુરેશની ફાઇ, જંગે એને ઉછેરીને મોટો કર્યાં છે તે, એનું ઉમળકાપૂર્વક વ્યાગત કરે છે સુરેશનું ઘર સમૃદ્ધ છે, પણ એને જે વાત સ્પર્શી જાય છે તે તો એ કે પોતાને (અચલાને) અંગેનાં કેવાં કેવાં સ્વપ્નાંથી સુરેશ એના જીવનને ભરી દીધું છે ફાઇ પ્રાગ્નાવિક વાતચીતમાંથી તેને જણાવે છે કે આવડા સમૃદ્ધ ઘરને માત્રિક- ગૃહિણીની મોટી ખોટ છે, સુરેશ કહ્યું તો હતું કે પોતે વડુ લાવવામાં છે, પણ કોણ જાણે કેમ પણ પછી વાત પાર નહીં પડી હોય, અને છુટકારો અનુભવવા એણે ગામડાના પ્લેગના દરદીઓને મદદ કરવાના કામમાં જ'પલા યું. અચલાને કંઈ નવવધુ અંગે વાત થઈ રહી હતી તે સમજવામાં મુશ્કેલી પડી નહીં. અબુથાકપણે સુરેશ કરેલા સભાન કે ગિન-સભાન સંવનન પ્રયાસોમાં આ નિમંત્રણ એ કદાચ મનાવૈજ્ઞાનિક દૃષ્ટિએ સૌથી મહત્વનો પ્રયાસ નીવડી રહે છે તે એને જાણે અવગણે, ફેંકી દે, જરૂર હોય તો ધિક્કારે તિરસ્કારે સુઢાં, પણ એ તો એમ જાણે છે—જેના અસ્તિત્વનો તંતુએ તંતુ અચલા માટેના તલસાટથી પ્રજ્વલી રહ્યો છે એવા માનવી કે એ હકીકતનો સાક્ષાત્કાર થયા પછી એને અંગે એ શું કરવાની છે? આ એવી વસ્તુ છે જેને એની ચેતના હળવેથી બાળુ મુકી દે અને પોતે શાંતિ મેળવે—એ સંભવિત નથી. જેમ એ જોઈ શકે છે કે એની સાથે લગ્ન કરવું એ અશક્ય છે, તેમ એ પણ એને સમજાય છે કે એની ઉપેક્ષા કરવી, એને ભૂલી જવો એ પણ એટલીજ અશક્ય વાત છે. પાછી ઘેર જ્યા નીકળી ત્યારે મુરેશના ચહેરા પર નજર પડતાં એનું ગળું ભાવોચ્છવાસથી રૂંધાય છે એમાં કશું આશ્ચર્ય નથી.

એવો સવાલ ઉઠાવવા માટે જ્યેષ્ઠેજ અવકાશ છે કે—તો પછી સુરેશને એ પરણી કેમ જતી નથી? અને ન પરણવામાં એનું ક્ષેપણ છે—પોતાની લાગણી પ્રત્યેની નિષ્ઠા પણ છે. પરંતુ હવે પછી એની કારમી સત્તા નીચે ન આવવું એને માટે મુશ્કેલ રહેશે.

મૃણાલ અંગેની ગેરસમજ જગભગ એને એ સત્તાના ખાળામાં ફેંકે છે માનવ લાગણીઓની એ ચતુર સમજદાર હોઇ એના ખ્યાલમાં આવી જાય છે કે રાજપુરથી તેમજ કલકત્તાથી વિદાય થતાં થતાં મૃણાલ વિલગ્ન કરે છે. મૃણાલના હાસ્યતરંગો ઊછળતા હોય ત્યારે પણ મલિમને મુંઝાજ રહેતો જોઈ એમાં એને કોઈ 'ગુપ્ત અન્યાય'ની કથાનો અહેસાસ આવે છે મુરેશ તાજીજ વિધવા બનેલી મૃણાલ સાથે લગ્ન સંબંધથી જોડાય એમ પણ એ ચાહે છે. એને નવાઈ તો લાગે છે—ન પરણવા અંગેનું સુરેશ જે કારણ આપે છે એથી ખરેખર એને એથી સ્વમાન ધવાયા જેવું લાગે છે. ઇશ્વરમાં ન માનતો આ માણસ, જેણે અચલાના માનવા પ્રમાણે મિત્રના ઘરને આગ લગાડી હતી અને એની પત્ની સાથે ભાગી જવા ચાહ્યું હતું, તેને મન મૃણાલ એ સર્વોત્કૃષ્ટ નારીગુણના પ્રતીક રૂપે હતી અને પોતાને એ 'દાદા' (ભાઈ) કહે છે એ અધિકારને પોતે પાત્ર રહે તો મહાભાગ્ય એમ એ માનતો હતો. અચલા કહે છે કે પોતે પણ મુશ્કેલ નેત્રી થઈ શકે છે. તેમ જતાં,



બીમાર પતિના બીજાના પાસે સોફામાં પોતે આરામ કરી રહી છે ને મોડી રાતે સુરેશ એને શાલ ઓઢાડી નય છે એથી એને બહુ સારું લાગે છે. સુરેશની તબિયત લથડી રહેલી જંતર્મ પતિ આરામ માટે જગલપુર જઈ રહ્યા છે તેની સાથે આવવા એણે એને નિમંત્રણ આપ્યું એમાં જંત કે કશું અસ્વાભાવિક નથી, પણ સુરેશ એ વાતને લાગણીની દૃષ્ટિએ વડાવે છે અને એ જે હિચકારાં પગલાં ભરે છે તેને પરિણામે એની દુષ્ટ સત્તાની જગ્યામાં એ ખેંચાઈને પડે છે. નિર્લજ્જ રીતે એને ભગાડી લઈ ગયા પછી ચાલતી ગાડી પર વર્ષાધારા વીંજાય છે અને એકલા સ્ત્રીઓના ડુબ્યામાં સુરેશની જીભનો કોરડો વીંજાય છે. અચ્ચાના આત્મગૌરવના રહ્યા સહ્યા અવશેષાને સુરેશ પગ તળે કચડે છે, એને ગળિકા કહે છે પોતાના પતિને મારી નાખવા જેણે ઘર સંગઠાવ્યું હતું એમ પોતે માનતી હતી તેની જંતે નાસી જવા માગતી હતી એજ ને પોતે ? અપમાનિત અને કેમે જટકી ન શકાય એ રીતે સુરેશની સત્તાની જગ્યામાં સપડાયેલી અચ્ચા રિહરી ધર્મશાળામાં એને મરણાસન્ન જુએ છે. એ તાલુગ થાય છે, પ્રભાવિત પણ થાય છે—છશ્વરમાં ન માનતા આ સુખવાદી માણસની મૃત્યુ માટેની નકરી નફિકરાઈ જંતર્મ. (શરતચંદ્રની સ્ત્રીઓ દા. ત. 'દેનાપાઓના'ની પોણી—પુરુષોના આ ગૃહ્ય પ્રભાવિત થતી જંતે મળે છે.) મૃત્યુની સંનિધિમાં એકવાર તો અચ્ચાને સુરેશની પોતા ઉપર જે સત્તા ચાલે છે તેમાં 'જેમાં નીતિ નથી, ધર્મ નથી, વિચારવિવેક, સારા નરસાની સમજ કશુંજ નથી એવા પ્રેમ'નો ભાસ થાય છે. એની તબિયત તદ્દન ભાંગી પડી છે એ સ્થિતિમાં એને એકલા મૂકીને જવાનો એ ખ્યાલ કરી શકતી નથી. પરિસ્થિતિની મોટામાં મોટી કટાક્ષમયતા તો એ વાતમાં છે કે જ્યારે એ પોતાની જાત સુરેશને હવાલે કરે છે ત્યારે એ જાણે છે કે ભલે એની નજરમાં તો પોતે અતિતુચ્છ છે પણ બીજા એક જગ્યાની દૃષ્ટિમાં પોતે ઉચ્ચ નારીગુણ ધરાવનારી (પોતે જંતી સરસાઈ કરવા ચાહે છે તે મૃલાલ જેવી) છે—અને તે કોઈની નહીં ને રામબાબુ જેવા પરંપરાનિષ્ઠ ધાર્મિક પુરુષની દૃષ્ટિમાં, અને એમની જીવનકાળ તળેજ એમને ખ્યાલે ન હોય એ રીતે એ એવા અનુભવમાં પસાર થઈ રહી છે કે જેને પછીથી તરતજ એ 'આત્મહત્યા' લેખવાની છે !

કર્તાની એક કલાકાર તરીકેની સકળતા વીગતેને પૂરતી પ્રતીતિકારક રીતે રજૂ કરવામાં રહેલી છે. દરેકે દરેક પગલે, જંત એ અનિવાર્ય છે એમ નિરૂપાયું હોય તો, નીતિ અંગેના નિર્ણય અધર મૂલતવી રહે છે અને કલા નીતિથી પર હોવાનું અનુભવાય છે, જંત કે કલાકૃતિના સમગ્ર નૈતિક સૂરથી જટકવાનો માર્ગ નથી.

'ગૃહહાલ'ના નૈતિક સૂરનો અનુભવ અચ્ચાના મહિમ માટેના સાચા પ્રેમ અને સુરેશની રાક્ષસી સત્તાના હુમલા સામેની એની રક્ષાબળીનતા વચ્ચેના તણાવમાં થાય છે.

મહિમ માટેના એના પ્રેમ અંગે સુરેશ મૃત્યુ ક્ષણે માત્ર એક વાતે મને ખૂબ દુઃખ થાય છે—અચ્ચા તને કેટલી ચાહતી હતી તે હુંયે ન સમજ્યો, તું પણ ન સમજ્યો, તે પોતે પણ ન સમજી શકી'—એ શબ્દોથી અંતિમ સાક્ષી પુરાવે છે એટલુંજ નહીં, રાક્ષસી કે રામબાબુને સુરેશ સાથેના પોતાના સંબંધ અંગે—એ ભલે છેડચોક જૂઠાણાનો આશ્રય લેતો હોય—પોતે જાણી જાણેને ગંદરસ્તે ન દોરવવા માટે જે ચાકસાઈપૂર્વકની સભાળ રાખે છે—ખાસ તો એ ઝટઝટ સાંજે થઈ જાય તે અંગેની તુલસીપૂજનો ઉપવાસ કરવાની ના પાડે છે—એમાંથી પણ એ એક રીતે વરતાય છે. અચ્ચાનો પ્રેમ તો છેજ એમ માની લઈને મહિમ ચાલતો લાગે છે, પણ એથી ઊંડરું પણ એટલુંજ સાચું છે (રાજપુરમાં મહિમે એને વચન નહોતું આપ્યું કે સહજવન 'એ શી ચીજ છે એવ સમજનાં વાર લાગે છે—જંત તારી એ બૂલ કહી પણ તને જાણાય તો મને જાણવજે, હું એ વખતે તને આપાને લઈ જઈશ' ?) એમના લગ્નનો વિરોધ કરનાર સુરેશ, અચ્ચા જુએ છે તો, એની આગળ વશ થઈને પડ્યો છે. એના અહમ્ને સ્પર્શે એવું કંઈ ને કંઈ બન્યાં કરે છે. સુરેશના સ્નેહના આવેશ-આવેગની જવાલામુખીના ભભૂકા જેવી ભયંકરતાની જાણે કે એની ઉપર વશીકરણ જેવી (હિપ્નોટિક) અસર થાય છે.

દુરિતની વ્રજચામળીની નીચે જાણે એ ન હોય, ગમે તેમ પણ એના સંકુલ વ્યક્તિત્વમાં કેટલીક વસ્તુઓ એવી છેજ ને એને હુમલા સામે રક્ષણ વિનાની બનાવી મૂકે.

અચલા અને સુરેશ જ્યાં—ખાસ કરીને સુરેશ જ્યાં પાત્રનું સર્જન કરવાનું શરતચંદ્રને એક કલાકાર તરીકે શી રીતે આવશ્યક જાણાયું હશે !

પોતાની નાની બેનની નવવ્રજકથા ‘યુધર્માંગ હાઇડ્રસ’—કેથરીન અને ‘જંગલી...નહારા’ હીથકલીફની કથાની પ્રસ્તાવનામાં શારલોટ બ્રોન્ટી (ક્યુરર બેઝના નામદ્રુસ હેડગ) આવા પ્રશ્નનો ઊલ્લાખો કરવા પ્રયત્ન કરે છે : “હીથકલીફ જેવા લોકોનું સર્જન કરવું તે વાજબી કે સલાહભરેલું છે કે કેમ, તે હું જાણતી નથી, મારે મને ભાગ્યે જ એ વાજબી કે સલાહભરેલું હોય. પણ આ હું જાણું છું; સર્જકતાની વિક્ષિપ્ત જોડે મળી છે તે લેખક પાસે એવું કશુંક છે જેનાં એ હમેશાં સ્વામી નથી—એ એવું કશુંક છે જે ક્યારેક ક્યારેક સળંગ સકલ્પશક્તિ દાખવે છે અને પોતાની મેળે કાર્યશીલ રહે છે.”

કલાનિર્મિતિની સહજરૂક્તિની સળંગતાનાં ‘ગૃહદાહ’માં દર્શન થાય છે આખી કૃતિમાં ક્યારેક તો એના આધાર પામવાની પ્રક્રિયામાં—અંગતરવ (આયુરની) જે ભાગ ભજવે છે તેમાં. અચલાને દીકરીના કહેતાં રામબાબુની જીભ સુકાદા બન્ય છે એ જોઈ આરંભમાં સુરેશને દીકરો કબી કહીને લાગી જતા કેદારબાબુ તરત યાદ આવી જાય છે. પુસ્તકને અંતે એક બાબુ રામબાબુ ધર્મદીન નારીના હાથનું પોતે ખાખ ખેંચી લેતા તેનું પ્રાયશ્ચિત્ત કરવા કાશી જવા ઊપડે છે તે સાથે જ કામકામડેલુ વ્રજને આવતા કેદારબાબુના પ્રવેશનું દ્રશ્ય રજૂ થયું છે,—‘ગારા’ના પરેશબાબુની જોડે જ ‘આલ્મસરંકારથી દૂર નીકળી જવા પામેલા એ વૃદ્ધને સંજીવની મૂળાલે મલિમની પાસેથી શીખેલી અનુભવવાત ભાળવેલી છે કે ‘યોગ્યાયોગ્યનો વિચાર કરવો તેને તો ક્ષમા કહેવામાં નથી આવતી’

‘ગૃહદાહ’, એકંદરે, રચનાકલા અને કસબનો સારો નમૂનો છે. તેમ છતાં નવવ્રજકથાની મહત્ત્વની એ વીગતો ત્રિકાંક પ્રતીતિજનક રૂપે એ રજૂ થઈ છે તેમ છતાં કાંઈક તાળીતૂશીને ગોઠવી હોય એવી લાગે છે : અચલા રેવંગાડીમાં અવગ મુસાફરી કરે છે તે, અને સુરેશના શર્યાખંડમાં અચલાને અનિવાર્ય પણ ધકેલાવું પડે એમાં રામબાબુની ઉપરિચિતિ જે રીતે ભાગ ભજવે છે તે. સમયને અંગે પણ જરીક મુશ્કેલી છે. લગ્ન પછી દંપતી રાજપુર ગામે કાવળમાં જાય છે, અને જામનપુર જવા માટે સુરેશના ધરેથી ઊપડે છે કાગળના આરંભમાં. મલિમનું ઘર બચ્ચું હતું ત્રણ પછી લગભગ દોઢ મલિનામાં અને એને સારવાર માટે કલકત્તામાં સુરેશને ઘરે લઈ આવવામાં આવ્યા બીજા પાખવાડિયામાં. આ જંગત કલકત્તામાં ચાર મલિના પથારીવશ રહ્યો એમ માનવું પડે. ઉધાકું છે કે કથાનાં મુખ્ય ત્રણ પાત્રોને મનોવૈજ્ઞાનિક તળાવની ઊંચી કક્ષાએ લાંબા સમય સુધી રાખવાં એ કર્તા માટે શક્ય ન હતું. તેમણે એથી પશ્ચાદ્બૂમિમાં એક ત્રીજા દૈન્યાદની આગ પણ છે, જેમાં સુરેશ એક સ્ત્રીનો જન અચાવવા કદી પડ્યો હતો.

સર્જક વેગની તીવ્રતાનું નિદર્શક બીજું તરવ છે ‘અગ્નિ’ના કલ્પનનો ઉપયોગ. કૃતિ એ આગ અંગે છે,—મલિમના ઘરને બાળનારી આગ અને સુરેશની ચિતાની આગ. એવું બને છે કે આખી કૃતિમાં આગને લગતાં કોડીબંધ કલ્પનો વેરાંચલાં પડ્યાં છે. અચલા સાથેની પહેલી મુલાકાત પછી સુરેશ ‘વૃથા બળતરામાં...પોતાના અંતરમાંથી બળી મર્યા હતો !’ બીજી મુલાકાત વેળા ‘તેના પિપાસાદગ્ધ હોઠમાંથી જાણે એકધારી તીક્ષ્ણ જવાળા ઊછળી બહાર આવવા લાગી’ અને પછી એના ‘હૃદયાકાશમાં અસંયમની આત્મગ્ધાનિનો તાપ...સળગી રહ્યો’ ગાડીમાં મલિમને સુરેશની આંખની દૃષ્ટિ બિલકુલ સ્વાભાવિક લાગતી નથી. ‘અંદર ભયંકર દાવાનળ ન સળગી રહ્યો હોય તો આવી કઠોર જવાળા કદી પણ એમાંથી બહાર

નીકળે નહીં.’ ડિહરી ઊતર્યા પછી સુરેશ અવધાને કહે છે : ‘જ્યાં જ્યાંથી અહીંની આગ વધારે ન આળી શકે એવે ઠેકાણે જવાનો મેં સંકલ્પ કરી લીધો છે.’ રામજાણુંને ઘેર મોડી રાતે ‘અચ્ચા અગ્નિશય્યા ઉપર બેસી રહી હોય એવો અનુભવ કરી રહી હતી.’ એવું સૂચવવાનો આશય નથી કે લેખકને અગ્નિ-કલ્પનાનું ઘેલું લાગ્યું છે અને ઇરાદાપૂર્વક એમણે જ્યાં ને ત્યાં તે ગાકવી દીધાં છે. એ કલ્પનો તો વગર શોધે સર્જકતાના વેગને પ્રતીક આવી લાગ્યાં છે અને તેથી તો અરોઅર તે તેને સ્થાને ઉચિત રીતે યોગ્યતાં જોવા મળે છે.

ગૃહદાહમાં ‘અગ્નિ’ જે ભાગ ભજવે છે તે એવું સૂચવી રહે કે સદગત્કૃતિથી કતાંએ એને એક પ્રતીક તરીકે યોજેલ છે. અગ્નિ, જે ભરખે છે ને સાથે સાથે શુદ્ધ કરે છે તે, ‘ગૃહદાહ’ના મુખ્ય પ્રતીક તરીકે આગળ તરી આવે છે. પ્રેમ, જે તે જ્વલતે માટેનો જ પ્રેમ ન હોય તો, ભરખે તેની સાથે જ શુદ્ધ પણ બનાવે. જન-પ્રેમજ એવો છે જે ભરખે અને શુદ્ધ કરે નહીં અથવા તો માત્ર બાળે અને ભરખે પણ નહીં. શરદચંદ્ર ‘ગૃહદાહ’માં ‘અગ્નિ’—પ્રતીકની મદદથી શારીરિક-સ્થૂલ થી માંડીને આધ્યાત્મિક સુષીના પ્રેમ-અનુભૂતિના સારાય સંતકને આલેખે છે. રાજપુરમાં મલિને માંદગીમાં ગાળેલા પંખવાડિયામાં વધુ સમય સમાવેલો છે (અને એ રીતે તરતમાં જ વિધવા થયેલી સૂણાસ કલ્પકતા તેની સાથે જઈ શકે તે પણ વધુ શક્ય બનાવ્યું છે) અને એ મુરેશને ઘેર આવ્યો ત્યારે શિયાળો આવી પહોંચ્યો છે એવું સૂચન કર્યું છે.

‘ગૃહદાહ’ના કેન્દ્રીય સારતત્ત્વ ઉપર ઉત્તમ વિવરણ જોવા મેં દસકા પછી ‘ફોર ક્વોર્ટર્સ’માં ડી. એસ. એલિયટ મંડેલા એક ગીતની પંક્તિઓ લાથવગી છે તે ઉતારવી યોગ્ય ધર્મે :

પવિત્ર આત્મા (કપોત)નું અવતરણ હવાને તોડે  
 ઝળાંઝળાં મહાભીતિની જ્યાંના વડે—  
 જિહ્વાઓ જોવી ઘોષિત કરે છુટકારો પાપમાંથી-બલમાંથી.  
 એક માત્ર આશા, નહીં તો પછી નિરાશા,  
 રહી છે ચિતા ને ચિતા વચ્ચેની પસદગીમાં  
 ગોચરવા માટે અગ્નિ વડે અગ્નિમાંથી

કાળ તો આ યોજે છે યાતના ! પ્રેમ.  
 પ્રેમ છે અગ્નિચિત નામ  
 તે લાથ પૂઠગત, જેમણે વપ્સ્યું  
 અસલ્ય અગ્નિજ્યાળાનું પહરણ,  
 માનવી લાથ જોનું ન કરી શકે નિવારણ.  
 આપણે તો માત્ર શ્વરીએ છાંએ, નિઃશ્વરીએ છાંએ,  
 ભરખાતા, અગ્નિથી અથવા અગ્નિથી.

કથાને અંતે શરદચંદ્ર મલિનેને જોનું ઘર ‘બહારથી અને અંદરથી સળગી જાયું’ છે એવી વ્યક્તિ તરીકે રજૂ કરે છે—ઈંટ, લાકડાં અને ઘાસનું બહારનું ઘર જ નહીં, પણ રચનાનું અને અભાસાઓનું આસય, પ્રેમનું મંદિર, પણ જાણે સળગી જાયું છે એમ લાગે. તે જ ‘ઝોંબો ઝોંબો ભગ્મસાત બની ગયો હતો.’ વિશાળ સદાનુભૂતિવાળા એના જોવા માણસ માટે આ એક અર્થમાં સાચું છે—‘નિનચંગત અર્થમાં, ‘જરૂર સરખો અગ્નિનો તાણો પણ તે આ

દુનિયામાં ફેલાવી શક્યો ન હતો પરંતુ આજે એની શક્તિએ રાડ નાખી હતી, સહન કરવા માટે નહીં, પરંતુ બધો મેળ મેળવી જોવા માટે' પોતાને સહન કરવું પડે એનો પ્રશ્ન નથી, યાચાતથ્યથી બધું જોઈ લેવું એ સવાલ છે—જે અંગત સ્વરૂપનો નથી મહિમ વ્યક્તિ તરીકે જનક જેવો છે, જેમણે કહ્યું હતું—મિથિલાયા દહ્મમાનાયા ન મેં કિચન દહ્મતે - મિથિલા બડકે બળે છે તેમાં મારું કવલેશ પણ કશું બળતું નથી. આવા માણસો સ્વયં-ઊગરેલા છે સુરેશને લાગેવળગે છે ત્યાં સુધી 'અગ્નિમાંથી એનો ઉગારો અગ્નિ વડે' થાય છે એ ડિહરી આવ્યા ત્યારે એને જે અગ્નિ બાળી રહ્યો હતો તેમાંથી ચિત્તાના અગ્નિ વડે એ મુક્તિ પામે છે માનવબંધુઓની સેવાના માર્ગે મજલ વટાવતો આ ચિત્તાના અગ્નિ સુધી એ પહોંચ્યો છે—પહેલાં ફેગનબાદમાં જ પહેોંચ્યો હોત પણ જરીક ખાતર એ ચૂકી ગયો હતો

અચલાએ પ્રેમ યાજેલી યાતનાનો અનુભવ કર્યો છે, અમિજવાળાનું વસ્ત્ર ધારણ કર્યું છે—જેને માનવીહાથ નિયારી શકે એમ નથી. એણે જનત-પ્રેમના અમિથી પોતાની જનતને ખલાસ થવા દીધી છે. પાપમાંથી અને ભૂલમાંથી છુટકારો મેળવવાની એની એકમાત્ર આશા છુપાઈ છે મૃણાલના એને પડે એ બિતરી આવવામાં, નારકી યાતનાલોકમાંથી ઉદ્ધાર પામી. તે પછી પશ્ચાત્તાપ-લોકમાં પસાર થઈ, પરમપ્રેમામિ વડે ભરખાઈ-ખૂટવામાં.

# Grhadāha

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In 1920, at the height of his creative activity Saratchandra wrote *Grhadāha*. It was a difficult novel to write. He had already portrayed a so-called 'fallen' woman like Rāplakṣmī, in whom were manifest the best womanly qualities. He had created Abhivā, who boldly travelled all the way to Burma to trace her husband, but on finding it impossible to share life with him showed utter disregard for the *mantrās* (sacred chantings) that had tied them in marriage and started life afresh with Rōhinibāhu, whom she had requested to escort her. He had written three years earlier, a highly controversial novel with a loud title, *Charitrahīn* which seemed as it were to parade characterlessness with a finerie. But to depict Achalā, a highly sensitive and intelligent young woman, being ardently wooed by Suresh the tempestuous friend of her fiancé Mihim, and being treacherously abducted by him while she was taking her husband to Jabalpur for rest, to show her ultimately living with him as his wife and sharing his bed, was not an easy thing to accomplish both in terms of art as well as social acceptance.

After all the earlier hero, Satīś, was not so much 'characterless' as a victim of misunderstanding, caused by his being found in his unlighted room with Sābitrī earlier by the young friends at the mess and later by his esteemed elders Upēndra and his wife Suribālā. Nor could Sābitrī be taken as one. If that epithet could legitimately stick to anybody, it might to Kṛānamayī. She gives herself to the doctor for the sake of money but spurns him as soon as she experiences love for Upēndra. Again, in order to spite Upēndra she leads his nephew Dibākṛ, astray. The psychic burden is too much to bear, even for such a , intellectually tough lady and her mind loses its balance. She could neither love like Sābitrī nor adhere to the traditional ideal of lifelong steadfast devotion to the husband like Suribālā, who had initiated her into it. And all around her she finds ruin, including her own. Sābitrī's love, which knows only how to give, has a build-in quality about it. Viewed thus, the Kṛānamayī part of the story of *Charitrahīn* is not superfluous as it appears to some critics but is highly relevant to the significance of the whole. Kṛānamayī, universally acclaimed as a rare beauty and erudite scholar, fails, however, to earn the sympathy of the rest of the characters of the novel much less that of its readers.

Achalā errs grievously, and ends up, by a flux of events that would seem inevitable, as one who is, even in her own eyes, characterless,—in her words, she 'had committed suicide', having killed the best in her. But how is it that at no point in the story she loses the sympathy of others, except for the final repulsion expressed by, ironically enough, the once dotting 'father', Rāmbābu, an exception which exposes the brittle nature of traditional virtue? The readers of *Gṛhadāha* do feel a jolt now and again at Surēś's outrageous behaviour, as indeed Achalā herself does but she almost uniformly retains their sympathy. What truth of human behaviour does Achalā embody?

Saratchandra has made it amply clear, time and again, that the preoccupation of a number of his woman characters with virtue, with steadfast love, with chastity has not mainly to do either with traditional values or with Hindu religion for that matter. Birāj Bau, in her quiet dignity, leaves her husband's house. Annadādidi leaves her father's to join her husband even though he had changed his religion and was no more a Hindu. The Saratchandra women rather show a deep concern for "the religion which has the sanctions of the heart (*hṛdayēna abhyanujñātāḥ yō dharmah*)". In *Rāmēr Sumati* Nārāyaṇī is reminded by her mother that, in throwing her door open to Rāma again, she was breaking the vow taken before her husband to keep the boy away from her for good. Nārāyaṇī asks her not to bother, adding that she had taken care of it. In fact, she, in her unerring faith in the truth of the human feeling, finds no need of referring the matter to her husband. On hearing of Charaṇ's serious illness, Kusum says to herself: That my inner self should clamour for my going to him and nursing him may not be a misjudgement. Śōṇāśī prefers to suffer from a stigma, lose her high position as the temple-priestess and become an outcast, under no other compulsion than that of her true feeling. Sābitrī even goes to the length of supporting an untruth that was prevalent about her just in order to protect the man whom she loved so dearly and selflessly.

In all such cases one finds that the search for Right (right behaviour) is validated by the spirit of suffering and self-sacrifice for the sake of the loved one, and results in restoring harmony and order in terribly upset lives.

Achalā is farthest from achieving anything of this kind. As a matter of fact when the curtain rings down on the story, everything is in shambles. As far as she herself is concerned, she finds her at the heart of an inferno, and she knows full well that she has to thank none else so much as herself for that predicament. That is why she refuses to complicate matters further by flaunting any more the untruth of her relationship with Surēś by lighting his funeral pyre as a lawful wife and later inquires of Mahim whether she could have an access to a Western-type Women's Home.

It was not just to malign the Brahmos, as it was believed by some, that Saratchandra picked up his heroine from a Brahmo family. It was an artistic need that made him do so. He wanted a heroine who, though still her mother's daughter, not able to shed all traditional Hindu values, was comparatively free to choose the way of her life and take crucial decisions pertaining to her worldly as well as inner life. She is presented as one who is intellectually well-equipped to exercise that freedom. Again her fiancé, Mahim, a man of frank and open nature, would want her to have all the world's freedom.

The question in *Gṛhadāha* is: Does Achalā exercise her freedom on every important occasion in a manner harmonious with the truth of her feeling? Do her significant actions have the sanctions of her heart?

She is not promiscuous like Kiraṇmayī or acts by trusting mere instinct as Kamal of a later work, *Śēṣ Praśna*, does almost on a principle. Achalā's responses come from a more

complex nature and appear, at least for that moment in most cases, plausible, being reinforced by psychological and circumstantial factors.

If her personality appears to be stormed too facilely even by a wild gate crashing nature like that of Surēś, one has to recall how subtly the novelist has shown that he very much existed in her mind already, that she had picked up from her conversations with Mahim that Surēś had twice saved his life, that he was against his marrying a Brahmo girl. Therefore, when he apologises for having spoken ill of his friend before her by folding his hands she touches them and holds them for a second. A natural thing for a girl of her upbringing to do. Also, when she seems to encourage him to see her alone, i.e. not necessarily in the company of Mahim, it may be just not to inhibit him from feeling free while speaking about his friend in order to 'save her'. She is intelligent enough to lose no time in detecting the brute in him and conveys to him in no ambiguous terms that she did not contemplate to marry him even in the event of her not being able to marry Mahim. Her sense of irony takes note of the fact that while the financial problem of her father got solved with the help of Surēś's money, her own was getting more complicated. The only comfort she can offer to Surēś while wiping his tears is that she never acted against her father's word. She does not affirm on her own. She then takes the earliest opportunity to request Mahim to save her from falling into the hands of his butcher friend, and puts a gold ring on his finger. Since things all these, to do. But even when ostensibly she has extricated herself from Surēś, she is not the same girl she was before her fateful encounter with him.

Even while she detests the crudities about Surēś, she catches herself being drawn to him. There is something in him that involves her all the more with him raising emotional expectations in him and provoking him if he needed any provocations at all to make more and more rash overtures.

The author has presented her as a motherless young woman who has nobody in the family to guide her not even a friend to talk to. She has a modest financial background and though she is not avaricious as her father seems to be she too is not blind to Surēś's being a man of means. She argues later for not spending after a travel by the first class coach to Jabalpur, however she has an eye for fine living. At Dibrū she alights from the horse carriage at Rāmbabū's residence laden with gold and jewellery. She is touched by Surēś's 'greatness' in risking his life for others his reckless passion is to be matched only by his boundless compassion. On reading in the papers accounts of his having saved an ailing lady from fire and suffered burns she conveys to her father the news about our Surēśbābū. She feels almost flattered that he had left home only because of the frustration he met with regard to her. He arrives. She sets right the bandage that slips while he bows to Kēdārābū. They are invited by him to pay a visit to his house before her marriage with Mahim takes place there. His aunt, who has brought him up lovingly receives her. She finds the house rich but what impresses her most is how richly he has filled his life with dreams of her. During a casual conversation the aunt conveys how the rich house missed the owneress that Surēś had promised that one was about to arrive but somehow or other it did not materialize and he plunged into the work of helping plague-stricken people as an escape. Achilā had no difficulty in knowing who the bride to be was. Of all the conscious or unconscious attempts at wooing by the indefatigable Surēś this invitation turns out to be psychologically the most momentous. She may disregard him, discard him, even despise him if she must, but here he was, every fibre of whose being was burning with a desire for her. What was she going to do with the realization of this fact? It is something which her consciousness cannot lay by and rest in.



peace. As she finds that it is impossible to marry him, she also realizes that it is equally impossible to ignore him, forget him. This is the tragic predicament which is responsible for her undoing. No wonder she feels her throat being choked with emotion, as she has a glimpse of his face when she leaves for her house.

There is hardly any room to raise the question: Why does she not marry Surēś then? She was wise and true to her feeling in not doing so. But henceforth she was to find it more and more difficult not to come under his malignant power.

The misunderstanding on account of Mṛṇāl almost throws her into the lap of that power. Shrewd observer of human feelings as she is, she marks how Mṛṇāl's departure is delayed both from Rajpur as well as Calcutta. In Mahim's reticence in the face of Mṛṇāl's rippling laughter she senses some tale of 'secret injustice'. She even wants Surēś to marry the newly-widowed Mṛṇāl. What surprises her—in fact she feels piqued—is the reason he gives for not doing so. To this God-less man, who had, as she believes, set fire to a friend's house and wanted to run away with his wife, Mṛṇāl stood as a symbol of the highest womanly virtue and he would feel blessed if he could just deserve to remain her 'brother'. Achalā asserts that she too could be like Mṛṇāl. However, she feels happy over the concern shown by him in putting a shawl over her in the dead of the night while she was resting on a sofa by her ailing husband's bedside. Though it was not unnatural on her part to invite Surēś, on finding his health deteriorating, to join her husband who was going to Jabalpur for convalescence, Surēś exploits it emotionally and she is dragged by his outrageous moves into the meshes of his dark power. After the shameless abduction, while the rain lashes against the running train, there is much tongue-lashing in the solitary woman's compartment. Surēś tramples upon the remnants of Achalā's self-respect, calling her a harlot, for having thought of running away from Rajpur with one she believed set fire to her husband's house to kill him. Humiliated and irretrievably caught in Surēś's power, she finds him near-dead at the Dihri inn. She is dazed— even impressed—by the utter disregard of this unbelieving hedonist for death (Saratchandra's women, for example Śōṛaśī in *Dēnā Pāōnā*, are impressed by this quality in men) and for once, in the proximity of death, the power that Surēś wields over himself appears to her to be that of 'love, that knows no morality, religion, right judgment, understanding of good and evil'. She could not think of leaving him alone when he was completely ruined in health. The irony of ironies is that when she gives herself over to him, she knows that though her name was mud to *him*, it does shine as that of a woman of matchless virtue (even like Mṛṇāl whom she aspired to emulate) in the eye of Rāmbābu, a traditionally religious person, who was unwittingly presiding over what she was soon to realize as her 'suicide'!

The author's success as an artist lies in presenting the details in a fairly convincing manner. At every step, if it is shown to be inevitable, the moral judgment remains suspended, and art does seem to be amoral, though there is no escaping the overall moral tone of a work of art.

The moral tone of *Gṛhadāha* is felt in the tension between Achalā's genuine love for Mahim and her vulnerability to Surēś's demoniac power.

Her love for Mahim not only has the final testimony of dying Surēś, who feels pained how all the three of them could not realize this truth, but also is borne out in a way by the meticulous care she has taken in refusing to misguide deliberately either Rākṣusī or Rāmbābu about her relationship with Surēś, even though the latter blatantly resorts to untruth,—especially in not fasting for his speedy recovery on the day of the Tulsi-worship. Though it appears that

Mahim took her love for granted, the opposite is also no less true (Had he not promised her at Rajpur that whenever she realized that her misgivings about partnership were misplaced, he would go to her and bring her back to him on her mere asking?) Surēs, who had opposed the marriage, himself came to her as a prize. Something or the other occurred that appealed to her ego. Her bringing up in a social climate conducive to hedonism rather than the spirit of self-sacrifice exposes her all the more to Surēs's status (The maddest limit to which her mind can go is her telling herself, in Dihru, that she *could* marry him in the event of her becoming a widow.) The ferocity of the volcanic eruption of Surēs's passion perhaps turned out to have a hypnotic effect on her. Was it the lure of the evil? In any case, her complex personality does seem to possess some traits which made her vulnerable.

Under what artistic compulsion did Srutchandria create such characters as Achalā and Surēs, especially the latter?

While introducing her sister's novel *Wuthering Heights*, the story of Katherine and the 'Savage, sinister' Heathcliff, Charlotte Brontë (under the pseudonym Currer Bell) tried to meet such a question: 'Whether it is right or advisable to create beings like Heathcliff I do not know, I scarcely think it is. But this I know: the writer who possesses the creative gift owns something of which he is not always master: something that at times strongly wills and works for itself.'

The forcefulness of the artistic intuition is manifest in *Gṛhadāha* in the role played by irony throughout, at times in the structuring of the work. Surēs thinks he was vanquished during the one hour of his first visit 'by the sheer strength of her extraordinary self-restraint' which, alas, was not to remain the same: thanks to him. In fact it is Achalā who has come under Surēs's power: however it is he who bitterly complains at Rajpur: 'You will have to bear in mind one thing. Though I have forfeited all my right over you, yours over me still continues'. One is reminded of Kēdārbābū's accepting Surēs as a son, when one hears Rāmbābū refer to Achalā as a 'daughter'. The exit of Rāmbābū for purifying himself from his association with an unreligious woman is juxtaposed, at the end, by the entry of Kēdārbābū who has travelled further from his Brahmin moorings even like Pūrūṣbābū of *Gōrā* and brings a heart overbrimming with forgiveness which his companion and guide Mṛnāl says quoting Mahim has little to do with the consideration of right and wrong.

*Gṛhadāha* turns out to be, on the whole, a well-constructed novel. However, two of the crucial devices in the novel, though appearing to be fairly plausible, are rather laboured: Achalā's travelling separately on the train, and the presence of Rāmbābū acting as a compulsion for driving Achalā into Surēs's bedroom. There seems to be a discrepancy about time also. After marriage, the couple reached the village Rajpur in Śrāvan and left Surēs's house for Jabalpur in early Falgun. In view of the fact that Mahim's house got burnt within about a month and a half of their marriage and he was brought to Surēs's house in Calcutta within another for medical treatment, it would appear that he spent about four months in bed in Calcutta. Evidently the author could not keep the three main characters together at a high pitch of psychological tension for a long period. He has, therefore, packed more time in the fortnight of Mahim's illness at Rajpur (also thereby facilitating newly-widowed Mṛnāl's accompanying him to Calcutta) and hinted that it was already winter when he was brought to Surēs's house.

The second artistic feature that shows the intensity of the creative impulse is the use of the image of fire. The work is about two fires, the fire that burns Mahim's house and that of the funeral pyre of Surēs. In the background is the fire into which Surēs plunged to save a woman at

Faizabad. It so happens that the whole work is strewn with scores of images which refer to fire. After the first meeting with Achalā, Surēś 'felt being scorched by an inner burning'. During the second, 'a piercing flame leapt from his lips' and then he feels as if he is 'burning from the sense of despondency due to self-indulgence'. Mahim detects on the train in Surēś's eyes 'a fierce flame' born of some 'awful inner conflagration'. After getting down at Dihri station, Surēś tells Achalā that he wanted to go 'to a place where the fire that was burning him here could not burn him any more'. On a night at Rāmbābu's house in Dihri 'Achalā experiences as if she was burning on a bed of fire'. It is not suggested that the author is obsessed with fire-images and has brought them in consciously, they came his way unsought for under the force of his creative intuition and that is why they are so apt, each in its proper place.

The role that 'fire' plays in *Gṛhadāha* would suggest that the author had intuitively employed it as a symbol. Fire, which purifies while it consumes, stands out as the pivotal symbol in *Gṛhadāha*. Love, if it is not mere self-love, would also purify while it would consume. It is only self-love which would consume without purifying or just burn without consuming. Saratchandra depicts the whole gamut of love-experience, from the biological, the earth-earthy, to the spiritual in *Gṛhadāha* with the help of the 'fire'—symbol.

I cannot do better than quote the lines of a song in *Four Quartets* by T. S. Eliot, written about two decades later, which come handy as an excellent gloss on the central significance of *Gṛhadāha* :

The dove descending breaks the air  
With flame of incandescent terror  
Of which the tongues declare  
The one discharge from sin and error.  
The only hope, or else despair  
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre—  
To be redeemed from fire by fire.

Who then devised the torment? Love.  
Love is the unfamiliar Name  
Behind the hands that wove  
The intolerable shirt of flame  
Which human power cannot remove.  
We only live, only suspire  
Consumed by either fire or fire.

Though Saratchandra shows Mahim in the end as one 'whose house has been done to ashes'—not only the house of mud, wood and grass 'but also his inner mansion'—the abode of dreams and aspirations, of love. He is presented as one who is 'himself done to ashes.' This is true of a man of wide sympathies like him in a sense—a non-personal sense. 'He had not set even a spark of fire in this world. However today his spirit cried out not because he was made to suffer but in order to put things in their proper places. Mahim, as a person, is like Janaka, who said. While Mithila is afire, nothing that is mine burns. Such a person is self-redeemed. As far as Surēś is concerned, he is 'redeemed from fire by fire.' He could free himself from 'the fire', that he so much wanted to escape from on arriving at Dihri station, by the fire of the funeral pyre, which he reached (and had but narrowly missed earlier at Faizabad) in the service of fellow beings.

Achalā has experienced the torment devised by love, put on the shirt of flame, which human power cannot remove. She has allowed herself to be consumed by the fire of self-love. Her hope of discharge from sin and error lies in Mṛṇāl's descending upon her, in her being rescued from the Inferno and in the eventual passing through the Purgatorio in being consumed by the fire of Love.



# શરદ્ધ્યન્દ્રનો ગુજરાતી સાહિત્ય પર પ્રભાવ

ચન્દ્રકાન્ત મહેતા

શરદ્ધ્યાણુ માત્ર યંગાળના જ નહિ, ભારતના જ નહિ, પણ વિશ્વના નવલકથાકાર હતા. એમની રચનાઓને પ્રભાવ ભારતની એકેએક ભાષા પર વત્તે ઓછે અંશે પડ્યો હતો. શરદ્ધ્યાણુના સમોદક તથા હૃદયહારી કથાશિલ્પના ગુજરાતી વાચકવર્ગને પરિચય સન ૧૯૨૩માં થયો. જ્યારે ગાંધીજીના કહેવાથી એમના અંગત મંત્રી શ્રી મહાદેવભાઈએ શરદ્ધ્યાણુની ત્રણ વાર્તાઓ 'ગિન્દુર છેલે', 'રામેર સુમતિ' તથા 'મેજદિદિ'ના ગુજરાતીમાં અનુવાદ કર્યા તથા ૧૯૨૪માં એમણે 'વિરાજવલ્લુ'ના અનુવાદ કર્યા. જોકે, તે પૂર્વે સન ૧૯૨૧માં શ્રી કૃષ્ણપ્રસાદ શાસ્ત્રીએ 'દત્તા'ના અનુવાદ 'વિજયા' નામથી પ્રગટ કર્યો હતો, પણ લોકોનું એ કથા પ્રત્યે વિશેષ ધ્યાન આકર્ષિત થયું નહોતું. શરદ્ધ્યાણુ પ્રત્યેનું આકર્ષણ તેો મહાદેવભાઈના અનુવાદોથી જ થયું એમ કહી શકાય. આમ ગુજરાત પણ યંગાળની જેમ લાગણીપ્રધાન તેો છે જ, અને તેમાં 'ગિન્દુર છેલે'ની ગિન્દુ, 'રામેર સુમતિ'ની નારાયણી તથા 'મેજદિદિ'ની હેમાંગિની ત્રણેમાં પારકા છોકરાં પર વાતસલ્યધારા એ ત્રણે નારીઓએ વર્ણવી છે, અને પારકા છોકરાં માટે પોતાનાં ધ્વજને સાથે પ્રયત્ન સધર્મમાં ઉતરીને પોતાની વાતને સ્વીકાર સ્વજનો પાસે કરાવે છે, એ વાતની મોહિની ગુજરાતી વાચકોને સ્પર્શી ગઈ. મહાદેવભાઈના અનુવાદ પણ મૂળકથા જેવા જ રસપ્રદ અને ચિત્તને પરોવી રાખે તેવો હતો.

કાકા કાલેલકર, કે જેઓ ગુરુદેવના શાન્તિનિકેતનમાં અધ્યાપન કાર્ય કરતા હતા, તેઓ જ્યારે શાન્તિનિકેતન છોડીને મહાત્મા ગાંધીના સાબરમતી આશ્રમમાં આવ્યા, ત્યારે એઓ એમની સાથે યંગાળી સાહિત્યના માધુર્યનો સંચય પણ લઈ આવ્યા. એમના પ્રયત્નથી જ ગાંધીજી સ્થાપિત ગુજરાત વિદ્યાપીઠમાં યંગાળીના અધ્યાપનની લાયકતા કરવામાં આવી, ને એ અધ્યાપન ભાર એમણે પોતે જ ઉપાડી લીધેલો. એમની પાસે જેઓ યંગાળી શાખ્યા, તેઓ યંગાળીના વધુ અભ્યાસ માટે શાન્તિનિકેતન ગયા, અને ત્યાં યંગાળીનો જોડો અભ્યાસ કરીને તેઓ ગુજરાત પાછા આવ્યા અને તે પછી એમણે શરદ્ધ્યાણુ તથા ગુરુદેવની રચનાઓને ગુજરાતીમાં અનુવાદિત કરવાનો આરંભ કર્યો. શરદ્ધ્યાણુની રચનાઓના જે અનુવાદો ગુજરાતીમાં થયા છે તેમાં ગુજરાત વિદ્યાપીઠના છાત્રોના ધણા મોટા અને નોંધપાત્ર કાળો છે. મહાદેવભાઈએ ગુરુદેવના કેટલાક લોકપ્રિય ગીતોના પણ ગુજરાતીમાં અનુવાદ કર્યા અને તેમાં 'એકલો જનનરે' તથા 'ચિંતા કર્યે ચાલશેના' વિશેષ લોકપ્રિય થયાં છે. એક દ્રષ્ટિએ જોઈએ તો સન ૧૯૨૩થી ગુજરાતી સાહિત્યમાં શરદ્ધ્યુગનો આગંભ થયો. તે વત્તે ઓછે

અંશે આજ દિન સુધી ચાલુ છે, કારણ કે ૧૯૭૩માં શરદ્દયાબુની અનંક કૃતિઓના અનુવાદ પ્રગટ થયા છે. આમ આજે ૫૦ વર્ષ પછી પણ એમનો પ્રભાવ અવિચ્છિન્ન રહ્યો છે. શરદ્દયાબુ ગુજરાતમાં કેટલા લોકપ્રિય થયા તેનો ખ્યાલ એના પરથી આવે છે, કે શરદ્દયાબુની ૩૭ રચનાઓના ગુજરાતીમાં ૧૩૯ અનુવાદો પ્રગટ થયા છે. અનં એક જ વ્યક્તિએ કરેલો અનુવાદ જુદા જુદા પ્રકાશકોએ પ્રગટ કરેલો, એ હકીકત લક્ષમાં લઈએ તો શરદ્દયાબુના ગુજરાતીમાં અનુદિત પુસ્તકોની સંખ્યા ૧૮૭ થાય છે. આ ઉપરાંત એમની એકની એક રચના જુદાં જુદાં શીર્ષકો આપીને પ્રગટ કરવામાં આવતી, જેમકે એમના ‘પથેર દાખી’ના ગુજરાતી અવતારને ‘અપૂર્વભારતી’, ‘પતિમંદિર’, ‘રૂપમાધુરી’ તથા ‘રૂપનાથ’ એ ચાર નામકરણો આપવામાં આવ્યાં. ‘પક્ષીસમાજ’ પણ એ રીતે જુદે જુદે નામે પ્રગટ થઈ. નગીનદાસ પારેખ તથા કિસનસિંહ ચાવડાએ પક્ષીસમાજ નામ રાખ્યું. માણિકજાલ જોશીએ એમના અનુવાદને રમા નામ આપ્યું. તે રમાજાલ સોનીએ એને ‘રમારમેશ’ નામ આપ્યું. આ અનુવાદો વિષે એક આશ્ચર્યજનક ઘટના એ છે, કે એક જ નવલકથાના એક જ વર્ષમાં, એક જ વ્યક્તિએ એ જિન્ન જિન્ન નામે આપી અનુવાદો કર્યા છે જેમકે ‘ગૃહદાહ’ના એ અનુવાદો ૧૯૭૬માં પ્રગટ થયા, તેમાં એકનું નામ ‘મંજીત’ રાખવામાં આવ્યું, ‘ખીજનું’ નામ ‘ગૃહદાહ’ રખાયું. એ જ રીતે ‘ચરિત્રહીન’નો અનુવાદ પણ ‘ચરિત્રહીન’ તથા ‘કિરણમયી’ એ એ નામોથી પ્રગટ થયો. એ જ કૃતિનું ગુજરાતી રૂપાંતર ૧૯૮૮માં રત્નેશ્વર વડીલે ‘પ્રભુચપકે’ નામથી કરેલું, અને એમાં જંગાળને બદલે ગુજરાતનો પરિવેશ રાખવામાં આવેલો તથા પાત્રોનાં નામ પણ બદલવામાં આવેલાં. એક અન્ય અનુવાદકે ‘નિષ્કૃતિ’ના એક અનુવાદને ‘નિષ્કૃતિ’ નામ આપ્યું. ખીજનને નવવિધાન એવું નામ આપ્યું. આમ એક જ કૃતિના અનંક નામોથી થયેલા અનુવાદોમાં, ‘બડોદિદિ’, ‘પંડિત મશાય’, ‘મેઝદિદિ’, ‘પક્ષીસમાજ’, ‘વૈકુંઠેર વીર’, ‘અરક્ષણીયા’, ‘નિષ્કૃતિ’, ‘ચરિત્રહીન’, ‘દત્તા’, ‘ગૃહદાહ’, ‘દેનાપાઓના’, ‘નવવિધાન’, ‘પથેરદાખી’, ‘પોડશી’, ‘શેષ પ્રશ્ન’, ‘શુભદા’ તથા ‘વિપ્રદાસ’ છે. આ ઉપરાંત શરદ્દયાબુની નહિ એવી ‘ચાંદ્રમુખ’ નામની રચના શરદ્દયાબુને નામે ચઢાવી તેના ત્રણ અનુવાદો થયા છે. આ સર્વ દર્શાવે છે કે, શરદ્દયાબુને નામે કમાળી કરવાની લેખકો તથા પ્રકાશકો વચ્ચે કેવી તીવ્ર હરિદ્રાખ ચાલતી હતી. આ બધા જ અનુવાદો જંગાળીમાંથી નથી થયા, એમાં સારી એવી સંખ્યામાં અનુવાદો દિન્દીમાંથી કરવામાં આવ્યા છે. એથી આપણને અનુવાદના અનુવાદો પ્રાપ્ત થયા છે આ બધી વિગતો ગુજરાતમાં શરદ્દયાબુને નામે પથ્થર તરતા હોય એવું દર્શાવે છે. પણ એ ગુજરાત માટે શોભારૂપ નથી જ, એ તો શરદ્દયાબુને નામે ગુજરાતે સારી પેઠે ચરી ખાધું છે, અને શરદ્દયાબુનું શોષણ કર્યું છે, એમ પણ કહી શકાય. કારણ કે મોટાભાગના અનુવાદકોએ અનુવાદની મંજૂરી મંગાવેલી નહિ, એટલે પછી મંજૂરી પેટે એમને કશું આપવાનો પ્રશ્ન જ રહેતો નથી.

ગુજરાતમાં જ્યારે શરદ્દયાબુનો આરંભ થયો, ત્યારે શ્રી મુનશીની લોકપ્રિયતા ચરમશિખરે પહોંચી હતી. શ્રી મુનશીએ એમની રચનાઓમાં નારીપાત્રોનું ચિત્રણ પરંપરાગત રીતે જ કર્યું હતું. અને જે સ્ત્રીપાત્રોએ પુરુષો સામે બળવો કર્યો હોય, તેમની એમણે અવદશા કરેલી. મંજરીએ પોતાના પતિને પોતે પસંદ કરવાની જતિ દર્શાવી તો એ વિદુષી સ્ત્રીને અંતે અભણ કાકાને પગે પડતાં લેખકે દર્શાવી છે. દેવયાનીએ પુત્ર સમોવડી થવામાં ગર્વ માન્યો, તો એની પ્રત્યે વાચકોને અભણમો ઉત્પન્ન થાય એવું એનું નિરૂપણ કર્યું. શશીએ પુરુષો સામે બંડ પોકાર્યું, અને એનો અંબનમ આવ્યો એ પિતૃતુલ્ય કાકાને જે સ્ત્રીઓના વિરોધ કરતો જ આવ્યો છે તેને પતિ તરીકે પસંદ કરે છે. એ રીતે શ્રી મુનશીએ પ્રત્યેક માનિતી સ્ત્રીપાત્રનો માનભંગ કર્યો છે, અને એમની પાસે પુરુષ શરણ ગચ્છામિ રટાવ્યું છે. એમણે નારીઓને વિદ્રોહને પથે ચઢાવી પછી આખરે પછાડી છે. આવી પરિસ્થિતિમાં શરદ્દયાબુની રચનાઓના અનુવાદ થયો, ને એમના શક્તિશાળી અને વિદ્રોહી નારીપાત્રો દ્વારા નારીઓ શક્તિરૂપિણી છે અને વિદ્રોહમાં સફળતા પ્રાપ્ત કરી શકે છે, તેનું દર્શન ગુજરાતી વાચકોને થયું. એમણે પાર્વતી, ગિજ્જલી, ભૈરવી, અભયા, માધવી, ચન્દ્રમુખી, સાવિત્રી, કિરણમયી, કમલ, ગિન્દુ, હેમાંગિની વગેરે નારીપાત્રોના ચિત્રણ દ્વારા, સામાજિક પરંપરાને તોડનાર, પ્રવર્તમાન માન્યતાઓનો અસ્વીકાર કરનાર, સ્ત્રીઓને

અંતમાં વિજયી બનાવી છે. એમણે એમની કથાઓ ઠારા એ પ્રસ્થાપિત કર્યું છે, કે સમાજમાં પોતાની પ્રતિષ્ઠા સ્થાપવા માટે, ને પોતાનું ગૌરવ સુરક્ષિત રાખવા માટે પુરુષોની સહાયની લવલેશ પણ જરૂર નથી, ઉલટું પુરુષો સામે એણે તો વિદ્રોહ કરવો પડે છે; સમાજમાં પોતાનું ગૌરવભર્યું સ્થાન પ્રાપ્ત કરવા એ પોતેજ સમર્થ છે. એમની ‘આંધારે આલો’ નવલિકામાં બિજલી નર્તકી છે, સત્યેન્દ્ર એના પ્રિયતમ છે. બંને રોજ સવારે ગંગા કિનારે નહાવા જાય છે, ત્યાં એમને મેળાપ થાય છે. અને ત્યાંજ પ્રેમના અંકુરો ફૂટે છે. જ્યારે સત્યેન્દ્રને ખબર પડે છે કે બિજલી નર્તકી છે, ત્યારે એ એને તિરસ્કાર કરે છે, ત્યારે બિજલી રડવા બેસતી નથી, અને કડુણ પરિસ્થિતિ સર્જતી નથી, પણ એ તો સત્યેન્દ્રને દગ્ગાં એવી બળબળતી વાણીમાં સંભળાવે છે, કે “જનઓ, પણ જે વાતનો અપરાધમજન હોવા છતાં મને વિશ્વાસ છે, તે વાતનો અવિશ્વાસ કરીને તમે અપરાધી થશો નહિ. વિશ્વાસ રાખો, કે બધાના દિલમાં ભગવાન વાસ કરે છે, ને મૃત્યુ પર્યન્ત ભગવાન એને છોડીને જતો નથી. ભલે બધાં મંદિરોમાં ભગવાનની પૂજા નહિ થતી હોય, છતાં પણ એ છે તે દેવતા. એને જોઈને ભલે માથું ન નમાવી શકો, પણ એની અવગણના કરીને ભાગી જવાનું પણ શક્ય નથી.” કેટલો બધો આત્મવિશ્વાસ ! કેવી ઉજ્જવળાદૃષ્ટિ ! આ બિજલી વાતમાં કડુણરસ ઉપજાવવા નથી આવી, પણ નવી દ્રષ્ટિનું પ્રદાન કરવા આવી છે. સમાજ જેને ધૃણાપાત્ર લેખ છે, તે નારીમાં પણ કેવું ઉચ્ચ જીવનદર્શન રહેલું છે, તેના પરિચય એ કરાવે છે. ‘શ્રીકાન્ત’ નવલકથામાં જ્યારે શ્રીકાન્તને લાગે છે, કે એણે રાજલક્ષ્મી જેટલે અત્યંત કઠોર વર્તન રાખ્યું છે, અને એની અક્ષય અચ્છેલના કરી છે, ત્યારે એ આત્મશોધન કરતાં વિચારે છે, “માણસ કંઈ ક્રમ એના શરીરનોજ બનેલો નથી, પિયારી હવે નથી, એ તો મરી ગઈ છે. પણ જે એક વખત એણે એને શરીરે કાળજી ચોપડ્યું હોય, તો એનેજ શું હું મોટું રૂપ આપીને જોયાં કરીશ અને જે રાજલક્ષ્મી એની સહસ્તકોટિ દુઃખની અગ્નિપરીક્ષાને પાર કરીને, આજે એની અક્ષકંક શુભ્રતાથી, મારી સામે આવીને બેઠી રહી છે, એની તરફ મોટું મચકોડીને એને જાકારો આપું ? માણસની અંદર જે પશુ રહેલો છે, ક્રમ તેનાજ અન્યાય એનાજ બૂલભ્રાન્તિનાં તોલમાપથી એને માપ્યા કરીશ અને જે દેવતા બધું દુઃખ બધી વ્યથા, બધાં અપમાનો એક પણ શબ્દ બોલ્યા વિના સહન કરીને આજે સરિખત મુખે એનીજ અંદરથી પ્રગટ થયો છે, તેને બેસવા આસન પણ નહિ આપું ? એજ શું માણસ માટેનું સાચું મૃત્યાંકન છે ? માટું મન એની સર્વશક્તિથી કહેવા લાગ્યું, “ના, ના, ના, એવું ક્યારેય નહિ બની શકે.” શ્રીકાન્તનું આ ચિંતન પ્રત્યેક વાચનને આત્માવલોકન કરવા પ્રેરે છે, અને એને નવી દૃષ્ટિ પ્રદાન કરે છે. મુનશીની નારીવિષયક દૃષ્ટિના પંકમાંથી શરદ્યાબુની આ દૃષ્ટિ વાચકોને સ્વચ્છ અને રમણીય જૂઠિ પર લાવી મૂકે છે. મુનશીની કથાદૃષ્ટિમાં વિદ્રોહ કરનાર સ્ત્રીપાત્ર આખરે પરાજય સ્વીકારીને પશ્ચાતાપ કરતાં કરતાં પુરુષની માફી માગે છે, જ્યારે શરદ્યાબુની રચનાઓમાં નારીપાત્રોના વિદ્રોહને કારણે પુરુષપાત્રો શ્રીકાન્તની જેમ પોતે સ્ત્રીઓને કરેલા અન્યાય માટે પશ્ચાતાપ કરે છે. શરદ્યાબુની આ દૃષ્ટિએજ ગુજરાતને એમની પ્રત્યે આકર્ષ્યું અને પુરુષમાનસે સ્ત્રી વિષયક પ્રત્યાઘાતી અને મધ્યકાલીન મનાવૃત્તિમાંથી છૂટકારો મેળવ્યો. એ રીતે શરદ્યાબુના સાહિત્યમાં તેજસ્વી અને વિદ્રોહી નારીપાત્રોનું અવતરણ થયું.

શરદ્યાબુનો અન્ય પ્રભાવ ગુજરાતી સાહિત્ય પર એ પક્ષો કે એમણે પાપ-પુણ્ય, નીતિ-અનીતિ, સારું-નરસું વિષેની પરંપરાગત માન્યતાઓ સદંતર પલટી નાખી. એમણે સમાજમાં જેનું સ્થાન નીચું તથા ગર્હણીય ગણાય એવાં સ્ત્રી પાત્રોનું ગૌરવ કર્યું, અને એના હૃદયમાં રહેલા દેવને પ્રગટ કરી બતાવ્યો. એમના નારીપાત્રોનું આપણે વિશ્લેષણ કરીએ તો અલકાએ બધી ધાર્મિક ભાવનાઓ ફગાળી દીધી છે, પાર્વતી પતિથી ઇતર એવા પરપુરુષ પ્રત્યે અનુરક્તા છે, એટલુંજ નહિ પણ એ પરપુરુષનેજ પોતાનો વર માન છે. સૌદામિની તથા કિરણમયી પતિદ્રોહી વ્યભિચારી છે, ચન્દ્રમુખી વારાંગના છે, રાજલક્ષ્મી હલકા લોકોનું મનોરંજન કરનારી નર્તકી છે. કમલ બે પુરુષોને છોડી ત્રીજા જેટલે રહેનારી વહેલી સ્ત્રી છે, જે ચિરંતનમાં નહિ, પણ ક્ષણનેજ મહત્વની માને એવી આજની પરિભાષામાં કહીએ તો અસ્તિત્વવાદી વિચારધારામાં



માનનારી છે. પરંતુ આ બધાં સ્ત્રીપાત્રોનું ચિત્રણ શરદ્દ્યાબુએ એટલા સમભાવથી તથા કલાત્મક અને સૌંદર્યમંડિત ઢંગથી કર્યું છે, કે એ દરેક સ્ત્રી પ્રત્યે આપણને ફક્ત સહાનુભૂતિ જ નહિ પણ પ્રેમ તથા આદર ઉપજાવે છે, સ્ત્રીના આ બીતરના સૌંદર્યનું એમણે દર્શન કરાવ્યું છે, તેથી જ શરદ્દ્યાબુ ફક્ત બંગાળના જ કથાકાર રહેતા નથી પણ ભારતીય કથાકાર બની ગયે છે. ફક્ત સ્ત્રી પાત્રો જ નહિ, પણ સમાજ જંમને તિરસ્કારપાત્ર ગણે એવા પુરુષપાત્રોના બીતરીસૌંદર્યનું એમણે દર્શન કરાવ્યું છે. દેવદાસ જેને સમાજ વેશ્યાગામી કહી તિરસ્કારે, જે દારૂડિયો છે, તેને એમણે સમગ્ર ભારતના વાચકોનું પ્રીતિભાજન બનાવ્યો છે. શ્રીકાન્ત જે ભમતારામ છે, ને જે રાજલક્ષ્મી જેની નર્તકી જેડે પ્રણયસંબંધ બાંધે છે, અને કમલ જેની વૈરાગી સ્ત્રીને પણ ચાહે છે, તેને પણ એ આપણને બહાલસોયો લાગે એવો ચિતર્યો છે. આમ બન્યું કારણ કે શરદ્દ્યાબુ માનવને સમાજ આપેલાં ઉછીનાં કાટલાંથી નથી માપતા, પરંતુ, સમગ્ર માનવને, એમનાં નવા ત્રાજવાં તથા કાટલાંથી માપે છે. કારણ એમાં માનવને ચાહે છે, માનવની અંદર જેવાની એમની પાસે સંજયદ્રષ્ટિ છે. આ સંજયદ્રષ્ટિનું એમણે આપણને પ્રદાન કર્યું એ એમની ભારતને સર્વોચ્ચ ફેણગી છે.

શરદ્દ્યાબુએ સ્ત્રીના હૃદયની વાતસલ્ય ભાવનાને પોતાના સંતાનો પૂરતી સીમિત ન રાખતાં, એ ધારાને પરાયાં સંતાન તરફ પણ મુકત રીતે વહેવડાવી; એ એમનું સ્મરણીય પ્રદાન કહી શકાય. એમની ઘણી કથાઓમાં સંઘર્ષ એટલા માટે જ થાય છે, કે સ્ત્રી પરાયાં સંતાનને પોતાના સંતાન જેટલાં, અને ક્યારેક તો અદકાં ચાહે છે. ‘રામેર સુમતિ’માં નારાયણી એના દિયર રામને ખૂબ ચાહે છે, કારણ કે રામ એનાં તાફાનોને લીધે બધાંનો તિરસ્કારપાત્ર બન્યો છે. અને રામને કારણે એ પોતાની મા તથા પતિની જેડે સંઘર્ષમાં ઉતરે છે. ‘મેજદિદિ’ની હેમાંગિની સાવકીબેન જેને હડધૂત કરે છે, એવા પડોશીના છોકરા પ્રત્યે પ્રેમ વધાવે છે, અને પતિ એનો વિરોધ કરે છે, ત્યારે પતિને છોડીને ચાલી ગયે છે. ‘બિન્દુર છેલે’માં બિન્દુ પોતાના જંઠના છોકરા માટે ઘરમાં બધા જેડે સંઘર્ષમાં ઉતરે છે. આ રીતે પારકાનાં છોકરાં માટે સ્ત્રીના હૃદયમાં જે પાતાળ ઝરણું વહેતું હોય છે, તેનું સુભગદર્શન કરાવી સ્ત્રીમાં રહેલા માતૃત્વભાવના વ્યાપકરૂપનું દર્શન કરાવ્યું.

ગુજરાતમાં શરદ્દ્યાબુનો પ્રભાવ વાચકો, લેખકો તથા પ્રકાશકો ત્રણે પર પડ્યો. શરદ્દ્યાબુની કૃતિઓનો ગુજરાતીમાં અનુવાદ થયો તે પછી શરદ્દ્યાબુનાં અનેક નાયક નાયિકા નામરૂપ બદલીને ગુજરાતી નવલકથાઓમાં અવતર્યાં. સન ૧૯૩૪માં સ્નેહરશ્મિની ત્રણ લઘુનવલનો સંગ્રહ ‘તૂટેલા તાર’ પ્રગટ થયો. એની પ્રસ્તાવનામાં સ્નેહરશ્મિએ એ કથાઓ ઉપર શરદ્દ્યાબુના પ્રભાવનો સ્પષ્ટતઃ એકરાર કર્યો છે. પાત્રનિરૂપણ તથા ઘટનાસંયોજન પર શરદ્દ્યાબુની અસર આંખે બિડીને વળગે એવી છે. તે પછી તો પન્નાલાલ પટેલ, યુનિલાલ મડિયા, હશ્વર પેટલીકર, શિવકુમાર જોષી, ચન્દ્રકાન્ત બક્ષી, ધીરુબેન પટેલ, મીનગ દીક્ષિત, સરોજ પાઠક મત્યાદિ લેખકોની કૃતિઓમાંના આપણને શરદ્દ્યાબુનાં વિદ્રોહી સ્ત્રીપાત્રોનાં જ દર્શન થાય છે. એ પાત્રો ગુજરાતી પરિવેશમાં ને ગુજરાતી સ્વાંગમાં અવતર્યાં હોય એમ લાગે છે. પન્નાલાલ પટેલની ‘મળેલા જીવ’ની નાયિકા જીવી, તથા ‘માનવીની ભવાઈ’ની નાયિકા રાણુ, ચન્દ્રકાન્ત બક્ષીની ‘અકલતાના કિનારા’ની નાયિકા અલકા, શિવકુમાર જોષીની ‘કંચુકાબંધ’ની નાયિકા ઉમા, આપણને દેવદાસની પાર્વતીનું સ્મરણ કરાવે છે. એ સર્વે નાયિકાઓ પાર્વતીની જંમજ એમનાં લગ્ન થયાં હોવા છતાં, પોતાના લગ્ન પૂર્વેના પ્રેમને જ સર્વસ્વ માને છે, અને સામાજિક બંધનોનો નહિ પણ હૃદયનાં બંધનોનો જ સ્વીકાર કરે છે. ‘માનવીની ભવાઈ’ તથા ‘ભાંગ્યાની ભેડ’ની નાયિકા રાણુ તો શરદ્દ્યાબુની નાયિકા જેવી જ વિદ્રોહી નારી છે. એની પ્રસ્તાવનામાં શ્રી દર્શકે એ પાત્રના સર્જનમાં શરદ્દ્યાબુના પ્રભાવનો સ્પષ્ટ ઉલ્લેખ કરતાં કહ્યું છે, “રવીન્દ્ર અને શરદ્દ્યાબુની યુગવ્યાપી અસરમાંથી કોઈ સર્જનશીલ લેખક છૂટી ન શકે એ તો નિર્વિવાદ વસ્તુ છે...રાણુ તો આપણા સર્જકોએ શરદ્દ્યાબુની રાજલક્ષ્મી, અલકા, ભૈરવી, અન્નદા ને પાડુ કે એવાં કંઈ કંઈ મહિમાવંત નારીપાત્રોનાં સંવન પછી ગ્રામભૂમિમાં રોપેલો બીજ છે.” ગુજરાતની ભૂમિમાં આવાં તેજસ્વી સ્ત્રીપાત્રો કે

જે પોતાનું સ્વયં સાચવીને સમાજની પરવા કર્યા વગર પોતાની મનસ્વી રીતે જીવે છે તે શરદ્દ્યાબુનીજ પ્રેરણાનું પરિણામ ગણી શકાય. શરદ્દ્યાબુના સ્ત્રીપાત્રો જેમ પરવાં છોકરાંની પર વાતસલ્ય વર્પાવે છે, તેવી રીતે રાબુ પણ જેઠનાં છોકરાંને પોતાનાં છોકરાંની જેટલું જ વહાલ કરે છે. ઇશ્વર પેટલીકરની નવલકથા ‘જનમટીપ’ની નાયિકા ચંદા; યુનિસાલ મડિયાની ‘લીલુડી ધરતી’ની નાયિકા સંતુ, ચન્દ્રકાન્ત બક્ષીની ‘રેમા’ની નાયિકા રેમા, શિવકુમાર જોષીની ‘અનંગરાગ’ની નાયિકા અનુરાધા, ધીરુભેન પટેલની ‘સીમળાના ફૂલ’ની નાયિકા રત્ના, મીનળ દાક્ષિતની નવલકથા ‘અધરાતમધરાત’ની નાયિકા લલિતા અને સરોજ પાઠકની ‘નાછટમેર’ની નાયિકા નિયતિ, શરદ્દ્યાબુનાં પાત્રોની જેમજ સામાજિક પરિસ્થિતિ સામે વીરાંગનાની જેમ ઝૂમ્મે છે, અને આપણને હૈરવી, કમલ, અચલા તથા કિરણમયી જેવાં પાત્રોનું સ્મરણ કરાવે છે. એ પાત્રો શરદ્દ્યાબુના સ્ત્રીપાત્રોની જેમ અગ્રણી નથી સગલા છે, અને શરદ્દ્યાબુનાં પાત્રો જે માટીમાંથી ઘડાયાં છે તેજ માટીમાંથી ઘડાયાં હોય એમ લાગે છે. શિવકુમાર જોષીએ તો એમની ત્રણ નવલકથાઓમાં ‘ગંગાળી સ્ત્રીઓનેજ નાયિકાનું સ્થાન આપ્યું છે, અને એ કથાઓની ઘટનાભૂમિ પણ ‘ગંગાળીજ છે. આથી પરિવેશ બદલવાની કડાકટમાં એમને પડવું પડ્યું નથી. એમની કથા ‘આભડવે એની નવલખધારે’ની નાયિકા કાજલ આપણને શરદ્દ્યાબુની ‘નવવિધાન’ની નાયિકા ઉપાનુ સ્મરણ કરાવે છે. ‘સાનલ ઝાંચ’ની નાયિકા પિયુ ‘વિપ્રદાસ’ની નાયિકા વંદનાનુ સ્મરણ કરાવે છે, અને પોતે જેને ચાહે છે તેની વિરુદ્ધ લાચાર બનીને સાક્ષી આપતી ‘કમલ કાનન કોલોની’ની નાયિકા અલ્પના ‘પક્ષીસમાજ’ની નાયિકા રમાની યાદ કરાવે છે. શરદ્દ્યાબુએ એમની ‘શ્રીકાન્ત’ નવલકથામાં ‘રાજલક્ષ્મી’ના પાત્ર કાગ એક ગાનારી તથા નાયનારીને ગૌરવભર્યું સ્થાન આપ્યું, તથા શ્રીકાન્ત જેડેતા એનો પ્રેમસંગંધ સ્થાપ્યો, એનાથીજ વળે પ્રેરણા મળી હોય તેમ શ્રી રમણલાલ દેસાઈએ એમની ‘પૂર્ણિમા’માં નાયિકા રાજેશ્વરી જે ગાયિકા તથા નર્તકી છે, તેનાં સમાજમાં પ્રતિષ્ઠિત એવા ભદ્રપુરુષ જેડે લગ્ન કરાવ્યાં છે. ‘પૂર્ણિમા’ની નાયિકા રાજેશ્વરીનું નામ પણ ‘શ્રીકાન્ત’ની રાજલક્ષ્મી પરથી રફ્યું હોય એમ લાગે છે. શ્રીકાન્ત જેવો રમણ છે, અને પ્રવર્તમાન સામાજિક માળખાંનો વિરોધ કરે છે, એની ન્યાતનાજ શ્રી ચન્દ્રકાન્ત બક્ષીની નવલકથાના લગભગ બધાજ નાયકો ભમતારામ છે. ને સામાજિક બંધનોને સ્વીકારતા નથી. શરદ્દ્યાબુએ એમના ‘પક્ષીસમાજ’માં ગ્રામજીવનનું યથાર્થચિત્ર આંક્યું છે, અને એ કથાનો નાયક ગામડાંને સુધારવા માટે ગામડાંમાં વસે છે, અને ત્યાં એને સમાજની અંતઃ પ્રકારની કુટિલતા તથા કૃત્સિતતાનો કટુ અનુભવ થાય છે, એજ રમેશ વળે ગુજરાતમાં આવીને, ગ્રામનુધાગળાનો ઝંડો લઈને, ગુજરાતના ગામડાંમાં અંતઃ કડવા અનુભવોમાંથી પસાર થાય છે, અલગત અહીં રમણલાલ દેસાઈની ‘ગ્રામલક્ષ્મી’માં એનું નામ અશ્વિન છે, તો પીતાંગર પટેલની ‘અંતરને બાળે’માં એનું નામ જ્યંત છે. ગ્રામનુધાગળાને ગાંધીજીના રચનાત્મક કાર્યક્રમમાં સ્થાન છે એ સાચું, પરંતુ ગાંધીજીની પ્રેરણાથી ગામડાંનું જે નિરુપણ થતું તેમાં ગામડાંને આદર્શ કે પે ચિતરવામાં આવતું, કારણ કે એમાં ગામડાંને મહેત્વી વ્યપરીત દર્શાવવા જે ઉદ્દેશ રહેતો એથી મહેત્વ અનેક દૃષ્ટાંતોથી ભરેલું આલેખાય, તો ગામડું એટલાંજ શુભતત્વોવાળું આલેખાયું હોય તોજ સમતુલા જાળવાયને! શરદ્દ્યાબુએ ગામડાંનું યથાર્થચિત્ર પક્ષીસમાજમાં આલેખી, ગામડાંમાં પણ શહેરમાં જેવા માણસો વસે છે તેવાંજ માણસો વસે છે—એજ સંકીર્ણતા, એજ તામસવૃત્તિ, એજ નિષ્કૃષ્ટ વ્યર્થવૃત્તિ તે દર્શાવ્યું છે ત્યાં પક્ષી આપણે ત્યાં પણ ગામડાંનું એવુંજ યથાર્થચિત્ર—એની સઘળી સારી નરસી બાજુઓ આલેખાવું શરૂ થયું. પન્નાલાલ, પેટલીકર, મડિયા, વગેરેની રચનાઓમાં જે ગ્રામજીવનનું યથાર્થચિત્ર દેખાય છે, તે શરદ્દ્યાબુનોજ પ્રભાવ લેખી શકાય.

શરદ્દ્યાબુએ આ રીતે કથાવસ્તુની એક નવી દિશા સૂઝાડી એમણે આપણા કથાકારોને એ પણ દર્શાવ્યું કે ધરના રોજીંદા જીવનમાં જે કંઈ બનતું હોય છે તેમાં પારવગરની કથા માટેની સામગ્રી પડી હોય છે, અને તેમાંથીજ રસ્યક કથાની રચના થઈ શકે. એમની કથાઓમાં મોટેભાગે ધરમાંજ ઘટનાઓ બનતી હોય છે એક રીતે કહીએ તો એમની કથાઓ,

પારિવારિક કથા હોય છે. ‘પરિણીતા’, ‘બડોદિદિ’, ‘વૈકુંઠેર વીલ’, ‘રામેર સુમતિ’, ‘બિન્દુર છેલે’ વગેરે પારિવારિક કથાઓજ છે, છતાં એઓ એમાંથી સુંદર કલાકૃતિઓ સર્જી શક્યા છે.

શરદ્ગાથુની અધૂરી રહેલી એક રચના ‘ગંગરજ’ શ્રીકાન્ત ત્રિવેદીએ પૂરી કરીને એને ‘અમરનાથ’ નામ આપીને પ્રગટ કરી છે, એમાં અન્તમાં લેખક શરદ્ગાથુની રચનાઓમાં હોય છે, તેવો વળાંક પણ લાવી શક્યા છે છતાં શરદ્ગાથુનું કથામાં અને શ્રીકાન્તરચિત કથામાં ગંગાજમના બંટલું અંતર જળાધ આવે છે.

શરદ્ગાથુની કૃતિઓએ આપણા અનેક લેખકોને પણ પ્રભાવિત કર્યા છે. શ્રી રામનારાયણ પાઠકે શરદ્ગાથુની અનેક નવલકથાના અનુવાદોની વિદતાપૂર્ણ પ્રસ્તાવના લખીને રસપ્રદ શરદ વિવેચન પૂરું પાડ્યું છે. શ્રી દર્શકે એમના ‘વાગીશ્વરીના કર્ણફૂલો’માં એમની કથાઓની ખૂબીઓ તથા એમની કથાશિષ્ટની સમૃદ્ધિની ખાંખી કરાવી છે. ‘સુધા’ સામાજિકમાં શરદ્ગાથુનાં સ્ત્રીપાત્રો વિષે મેં ‘આર લેખો લખ્યા હતા, તેના અહીં સંદેહ ઉદ્ભવે કંઈ છે. શ્રી મનસુખલાલ ઝવેરીએ પણ દેવદાસની પાડુ વિષે કાવ્ય લખ્યું છે, તે આપણા કવિઓને શરદ્ગાથુએ શી રીતે પ્રભાવિત કર્યા તેનું દૃઢાન્ત છે.

આ પ્રમાણે શરદ્ગાથુએ એમની રચનાઓ દ્વારા ગુજરાતના કથાલેખકોને પ્રભાવિત કર્યા છે, અને એમના પ્રભાવથી આપણા કથાલેખકોને નવી દિશા સાંપડી છે, તે નિર્વિવાદ છે એમણે એમની કથાઓ દ્વારા સ્ત્રીઓમાં આત્મવિશ્વાસની ભાવના જગાડી એમની સુષુપ્ત શક્તિનું ઉદ્ઘાટન કર્યું. ગુજરાતના રાજકીય તથા સામાજિક ક્ષેત્રે ગાંધીજીએ સ્ત્રીઓને ગૌરવાન્વિત સ્થાન અપાવ્યું, તે સાહિત્યક્ષેત્રે એ ક્ષેત્રમાં શરદ્ગાથુનું યોગદાન પણ મહત્વનું છે. એમણે એમની કથાઓ દ્વારા સ્ત્રીઓને એમના સ્વત્વનું જ્ઞાન કરાવ્યું અત્યાચાર સહન કરવામાં ગૌરવ નથી, પણ અત્યાચાર સામે મોરચા માંડતાં એમણે સ્ત્રીઓને શીખવ્યું. આ રીતે શરદ્ગાથુએ ગુજરાતને શરદ્ગાથુના માધુર્યનો પરિચય કરાવ્યો, જે માટે ગુજરાત એમનું સદાસર્વદા ઋણી રહેશે.

# Saratchandra's influence on Gujarati literature

Chandra Kant Mehta

Saratchandra was not only one of the greatest novelists of Bengal but of India as well as of the world. He has influenced the fiction of almost all regional literatures of India. Gujarat knew of the bewitching and highly artistic beauty of the fiction of Saratchandra in 1923 when, at the instance of Mahatma Gandhi, his personal secretary Mahadev Desai translated three of his novelettes in Gujarati *Rāmēr Sumati*, *Bindur Chhēlē* and *Mējdidi*. In 1924, he translated *Birāj Bau*. Though the first book of Saratchandra to appear in Gujarati was *Dattā* translated by Ratneswar Vakil, under the title *Bijayā*, it did not attract the Gujarati readers. Fiction reading public was first attracted to Saratchandra only by the translations of Mahadev Desai. As such, Gujarati people are also highly sentimental like the people of Bengal, and they were enchanted especially when they came into contact with Bindu of *Bindur Chhēlē*, Nārāyanī of *Rāmēr Sumati*, Hēmānginī of *Mējdidi*, who showered their affection on children who were not their own, and who came into conflict with members of their family for such behaviour, and ultimately won their battle. Mahadev Desai's translation which also retained the beauty of the original was also responsible for capturing the hearts of Gujarati readers.

When Kaka Kalelker, who was a teacher in Santiniketan, came to Gujarat and joined Gujarat Vidyapith established by Gandhiji, he brought with him the delicious nectar of Bengali literature. Because of his efforts, arrangements were made for the teaching of Bengali in Gujarat Vidyapith, and he himself undertook to impart instructions in Bengali. Those who learnt Bengali from him were sent to Santiniketan for higher studies in Bengali. They, after having mastered Bengali, returned to Gujarat, and began translating the works of Gurudev and Saratchandra. Most of the translators of Saratchandra are from Gujarat Vidyapith. Mahadev Desai also by his translations popularised some of the best songs of Gurudev, like 'একনা চলো' and 'তোরা আপনজনে ছাড়বে তোরে, তা বলে ভাবনা করা চলবে না।'

The Sarat era started in Gujarati literature from 1923 and it continues upto this day because several translations of Saratchandra's works have been published in 1973, and some in 1976 also, it being the Sarat centenary year. This indicates that even after half a century fascination for Saratchandra has not declined. One may have an idea of Saratchandra's immense

popularity in Gujarat from the fact that the Bengali works of Saratchandra are 37 while the figure of translated works in Gujarati is 139, and if we take into consideration a single work of translation brought out by several publishers, the published translated works mount up to 187. Saratchandra had become so popular that translation of a single work of his was published under different titles ; for example, there are four titles of his *Pathēr Dāhī* in Gujarati, namely *Apūrba Bhārati*, *Pathamundir*, *Rūp Mādhurī*, and *Rūpnāth*. His *Pallī-Samāj* was also published under different titles. Nagindas Parekh and Kishansingh Chavda in their translation retained the original name *Pallī-Samāj*, Maneklal Joshi gave the title *Ramā* ; while Ramanlal Soni gave the title *Ramā Ramēs*. One astounding fact about these translations is that the same translator has published the translations of the same work in the same year under different heads. For example, two translations of *Gṛhadāha* were published in 1939, and the translator was the same. The name of one translation was *Mañjil* while the original name *Gṛhadāha* was retained in the other translation. Similarly, a single translator published the translation of *Charitrahīn* in the year 1939, one under the title *Charitrahīn* and the other under the title *Kiraṇmayī*. One Ratneswar Vakil published the adaptation of the novel in 1924 under the title *Pranayapañk*. He has given it a Gujarati setting, changed the names of the characters, and retained the main incidents of the story. Another translator of *Niṣkṛti* has also published two translations of the book in 1938 giving the name *Niṣkṛti* to one and *Naba-Bidhān* to the other. The novels which are given different titles are *Baradidi*, *Paṇḍit Maśāi*, *Mējdidī*, *Pallī-Samāj*, *Baikunthēr Will*, *Arakṣaṇīyā*, *Niṣkṛti*, *Charitrahīn*, *Dattā*, *Gṛhadāha*, *Dēnā-Pāṇā*, *Naba-Bidhān*, *Pathēr Dāhī*, *Śōraśī*, *Śēṣ Praśna*, *Śubhadā*, and *Bipradās*. The translators have fully exploited the popularity of Saratchandra by publishing a work called *Chādmukh*, which is not Saratchandra's, in the name of Saratchandra, and curiously there are three translations of this work. This shows how the translators and publishers were out to exploit the popularity of Saratchandra to achieve their selfish ends. Some of the translators did not know Bengali and they translated the works from Hindi, and poor Gujarati readers have been given second hand translations. All these facts, on the one hand, indicate how Saratchandra had captivated the hearts of Gujaratis, while, on the other hand, they reveal how that popularity was fully exploited by the translators and publishers to further their personal ends.

When the Sarat era dawned in Gujarat, Kanaiyalal Munshi's popularity as fiction writer was at the highest peak. Munshi had in his novels depicted his female characters in a traditional and orthodox manner. Though Munshi claimed that he was a breaker of traditions, in reality all his novels present a totally different picture of his attitude towards tradition. He seems to be the custodian of tradition. In his novels those female characters, who have tried to revolt against the tradition, have been punished by the author for their audacity. In his novel *Gujrātīnō Nāth*, the heroine Mañjarī resisted marrying an almost illiterate person, because she was a Sanskrit Scholar, but in the end, we see her remorseful for her behaviour, and she falls at the feet of Kāk whom she scoffed earlier. In his drama *Kakānī Śaśī*, heroine Śaśī is in revolt against the oppression of women by men, and she starts a campaign for saving women from the atrocities of men. But, in the end, she falls at the feet of Manōharlāl, who was her foster father and who admonished her for starting a campaign for freeing women from the clutches of men, and implores him to accept her as his wife. Thus, Munshi has depicted a superiority of men over women. Under such circumstances, Saratchandra's works were translated in Gujarati, and Gujarati readers, through the powerful rebel female characters of Saratchandra, realised the inner strength of women, and how they can be instrumental in ushering in a new era, when women will not be dominated by men, but will be their equal, enjoying the same social status as men. Saratchandra's *Pārbatī*, *Bijali*, *Abhayā*, *Mādhavī*, *Chandramukhī*, *Sābitrī*, *Kiraṇmayī*, *Kamal*, *Bindu*, *Hēmāngini*, successfully revolt against the tradition. By depicting

such female characters he has established that in gaining their equal, respectable and dignified status in society women do not require the help of men, they themselves, by their inner strength, are capable of achieving that end, and they can frustrate all the evil designs of men to subdue them. In his short story *Ādhārē Ālō*, heroine Bijali is a dancing girl. She daily goes to the river Ganga for a dip, and there she happens to meet one Satyendra, and they fall in love. When Satyendra comes to know that she is a dancing girl, he turns his face away from her. At that time, she does not cry or create a scene, but tells him in a forceful language "Go, but do not be guilty of not having faith in a fact, which I have, though I am supposed to be guilty. Have faith that God resides in the heart of every human being and He does not leave the body till his death. Might be that in every temple God is not worshipped, yet one cannot deny the fact that God is stationed there. You might not kneel before Him, but at the same time you cannot ignore Him." These most powerful words of Bijali set the readers rethinking about the social structure. Thus, in Saratchandra's novel, even a dancing girl has a message to give a message of faith and piety. Bijali is not there to arouse our sympathy, as is usual for female characters in other novels, but to impart us a new vision. In his novel *Śrikānta*, when Śrikānta is in reflective mood, he feels that he has ill-treated Rājlakṣmī. He says to himself "Man does not consist of his body alone. Piyārī is no more. She is dead, but if she has soiled her body once, am I always to look at that black spot with a magnifying glass, and turn away my eyes from her, who stands in front of me with all her brightness and purity, having successfully come out of the fiery ordeal? Am I to evaluate a human being, by the fake standard of the animal residing in me, and not offer even a seat to the Divine in her, which has emerged from her after suffering all the humiliations and ill-treatment and tortures of society? Is it the correct method of evaluating a human being? My mind from within replied with all its force: No, No, No." This view of Śrikānta is shared by all the readers of the novel, and he tried to look at the man-woman relation with different glasses. Thus, Saratchandra has been able to lift the Gujarati readers from the muddy ground of Munshi's conception of women, and puts him on a clean and beautiful ground. In Munshi's novels, female characters, after revolting against the social norms, repent their behaviour and ask for forgiveness, while in Saratchandra's novels, because of the revolt of the female characters against the social norms, males like Śrikānta ask for forgiveness for their behaviour. Because of his new conception about women, Saratchandra endeared himself to Gujarati readers for freeing them from the age-old misconceptions about women. Thus, Saratchandra was responsible for giving powerful and revolting women to Gujarati fiction.

The other influence of Saratchandra on Gujarati writers was that he made revolutionary changes in the traditional conceptions of good and evil, of morality and immorality, of sin and piety. He upgraded the women who were considered low and abominable, and he brought out the goodness in them. If we analyse the female characters of Saratchandra, Alakā has discarded all moral values; Pārbatī loves somebody who is other than her husband, and not only that, she considers her lover as her husband; Saudāmini and Kṛaṇmayī are 'unchaste' women who are disloyal to their husbands; Chindramukhi is a dancing girl; Rājlakṣmī entertains people who are immoral; Kamal has abandoned her two husbands and is living illegally with a third person. She, like an existentialist, gives more importance to momentary things than to eternal things. Yet Saratchandra has depicted these characters in such a manner that we not only sympathise with them but love and adore them. Because he has shown the inner beauty of women, Saratchandra has elevated himself to an Indian novelist of repute. Not only his female characters, but his male characters are also depicted in such a way that, though outwardly they may appear as immoral and low, their inner beauty is focussed by him. Dēhdās who is a

drunkard, and visits prostitutes, is depicted in such a way that all the readers love him and sympathise with him. Śrīkānta who is a vagabond, and loves a dancing girl, and also loves a woman like Kamal-latā who has renounced the world, is also depicted in such a manner that he endears himself to the readers. This is so because Saratchandra does not evaluate a human being with borrowed ethical standards, but he evaluates the whole man with his weights and measures because he is a lover of humanity. He has an x-ray eye to look into the inner recesses of the heart of human beings and his presentation of this x-ray vision is his greatest contribution to the people of this land and the world.

His other remarkable contribution is that he has not limited the motherly love of women to her own children but has widened its horizon to take in others' children and love them as their own, and even more. In many of his novels, female characters come in clash with their kith and kin simply because they love others' children. In his *Rāmēr Sumati*, Nārāyaṇī loves her brother-in-law, while all hate him because of his pranks. Because of Rām she earns displeasure of her mother as well as husband. Hēmāṅginī of *Mējdidi* loves an orphan, who is step brother of her sister-in-law, and when her husband resents, she leaves her husband, and returns only on her own terms. Bindu of *Bindur Chhēlē* comes into conflict with all the members of her family for the sake of the son of her brother-in-law. Thus, Saratchandra has given us a glimpse of the vast resources of motherly love which are normal in women.

Influence of Saratchandra in Gujarat is to be found on readers, writers, as well as publishers. After the works of Saratchandra were translated into Gujarati, many heroes and heroines of Saratchandra descended on Gujarat after having changed their names and forms. In 1934, three novelettes of Sneharasmi *Tuṭēlā Tār* were published. In the preface the author has clearly expressed his indebtedness to Saratchandra, as far as the theme and characters are concerned. After that, in the novels of Pannalal Patel, Chunilal Madia, Iswar Petliker, Shivkumar Joshi, Chandrakant Baxi, Dhiruben Patel, Saroj Pathak and Minal Dixit, we find revolting female characters who seem to have been trained by female characters of Saratchandra, and appear as Saratchandra's characters reborn in a Gujarati atmosphere, faced with similar situations and adopting similar methods in combating adverse circumstances. Jivī, the heroine of Pannalal Patel's novel *Mālēlā Jī*, Rāju, the heroine of *Mānvīni Bhavāi*, Alka, the heroine of Chandrakant Baxi's novel *Ēkaltānā Kinārā*, Uma, the heroine of Shivkumar Joshi's novel *Kanchukibandh* remind us of Pārbatī the heroine of *Dēdhās* in that, though married, they justify their extramarital relations, and consider their lovers as their real husbands. Their loyalty is not to their husbands but to their lovers only. Rāju, the heroine of *Mānvīni Bhavāi* and *Bhāṅgyūnō Bhēru* by Pannalal Patel is just the prototype of Saratchandra's heroines. In the preface of the book, Darshak, describing the influence of Saratchandra on the author, has clearly stated: "It is an indisputable fact that no creative writer can escape from the all-pervading influence of Rabindranath and Saratchandra... Rāju is the sprout of the seeds planted in our soil, after coming into close contact with the great women of Saratchandra like Rājlakṣmī, Alaka (Bhairabi) and Annadā." Such powerful female characters in Gujarati novels who don't care two hoots for social taboos and live a life according to the dictates of their own conscience, can be indisputably considered the outcome of the influence of Saratchandra. Just as the female characters of Saratchandra shower their motherly love on somebody else's children, Rāju also loves the children of her brother-in-law, as if they were her own sons and daughters. Chandā, the heroine of Iswar Petliker's novel *Janamtīp*, Santu, the heroine of Chunilal Madia's novel *Līludi Dharti*, Rōmā, the heroine of Chandrakant Baxi's novel *Rōmā*, Anurādhā, the heroine of Shivkumar Joshi's novel *Anaṅgrāg*, Ratnā, the heroine of Dhiruben Patel's novel *Śīmlānā Phūl*, Lalitā, the heroine of Minal Dixit's novel *Ādhārāt mādharāt*, and Niyati, the heroine of Saroj Pathak's novel *Nightmare*, bravely face adverse circumstances and remind us of

Bhanabi, Kamal, Achalā, and Kīrtanmayī. Like Saratchandra's heroines, the female characters of the above mentioned novels are not representatives of the weaker sex, but of a stronger sex and are made of the same substance from which Saratchandra's female characters are created. Shivkumar Joshi in his three novels selected a Bengali woman as his heroine and the field of operation is also Bengal, and so he is free from the botheration of changing the regional atmosphere. Kājal the heroine of his novel *Ābh Ruvē Fm Navalakh Dhūrē* reminds us of Usā, the heroine of Saratchandra's novel *Naba Bidhān*. Piyu, the heroine of his novel *Sōnal Chhāya* reminds us of Saratchandra's Bandanā, the heroine of *Bipradās* and Ālpinā, the heroine of his novel *Kamal Kānan Kalām*, who gives evidence against her lover in a court reminds us of Saratchandra's Rumā of his novel *Pallī Samāj*, who also acts in a similar way. Saratchandra in his novel *Śrīkānta* raised Rājīksmī the heroine who is a singing girl to a very respectable position in society and made her an ideal lady love of Śrīkānta. Having taken a cue from her Ramanlal Desai in his novel *Pūrnīmā* has made a dancing girl the heroine of the novel and named his heroine Rājēswarī a name which is borrowed from Rājīksmī. The heroine is married to a person of a respectable family, who falls in love with her, when he visits her place. Just as Śrīkānta is a vagabond similarly almost all the heroes of Chhandrakant Baxi are vagabonds. Saratchandra in his novel *Pallī-Samāj* has depicted a realistic picture of village life, and the hero of the novel goes to the village with the object of improving the living conditions of villagers and there he experiences the rustic petty mindedness, jealousies, blackmatting and ugliness. The same Rāmēś comes to Gujarat, passes through identical experiences in Ramanlal Desai's novel *Grāmlaksmī* of course there his name is Aswin and he goes to another village of Gujarat assuming the name Jayant and has the same bitter experiences in Pitambar Patel's novel *Khētarnē Khōlē*. It is true that village reconstruction has a prominent place in the ten point constructive programme of Gandhiji. But under Gandhiji's influence village was an ideal place in contrast to the city and hence village was a place which represented everything that was good. And Saratchandra has depicted village in its true colours and the depiction of village life, in the Gujarati novels can be indisputedly said to be the influence of Saratchandra.

Thus, Saratchandra opened new horizons before the fiction writers of Gujarat. He also showed our writers that there was enough of raw material for the fiction in the day to day happenings in the family, and even trifling and insignificant happenings have immense potentialities for a fiction writer. In most of his novels the incidents are from day to day life of the family. In a way we can say that his novels depict what happens in a family. *Parinitā Baradich*, *Balkunther Will*, *Rāmcr Sumati*, *Bindur Chhēlē* etc. are family stories. Yet from trifling incidents he has erected artistic structures.

*Jāgaran* an unfinished novel of Saratchandra has been completed by Shrikant Trivedi and he has given the title *Amarnāth* to the work. In the end, the incidents take a dramatic turn as happens in the novels of Saratchandra, yet we can at once see the difference of the giant and the pigmy in the novel.

Saratchandra's works have inspired many non-fiction writers also. Raminurayan Pathak in many of the prefaces of Saratchandra's translations has provided critical analysis of Saratchandra's art of fiction. Pathak was one of the foremost critics of Gujarati literature and has enriched literary criticism in Gujarati. Darshak, in his book *Vāgīśvarīmā Karnaphūlo* has evaluated the greatness of Saratchandra as a fiction writer. I have written twelve articles on female characters of Saratchandra in a women's weekly 'Sudha'. Mansukhlal Jhaveri, a poet of repute has written a poem on Pārbati, which is an illustration of the impact of Saratchandra on our creative writers. Thus, Saratchandra's impact on Gujarati literature was tremendous. The fiction writers of Gujarat gained a new vision. Saratchandra created a sense of self confidence, and they shed their sense of



inferiority complex. In the social and political field of Gujarat, Mahatma Gandhi gave a respectable place in the society to the so-called weaker sex, and in the literary field that work is done by Saratchandra. He has made women realise that greatness lies in fighting the forces of tyranny and injustice, and he, through his novels, has trained the women to fight the forces which keep them in bondage, and so, Gujarat is as much indebted to Saratchandra as she is to Gandhiji.

# शरत्चन्द्र : श्रद्धांजलि

जैनेन्द्र कुमार

शरत्चन्द्र के अवसान की खबर मिली तो नहीं कह सकता कैसा सुझं धक्का लगा। मेरा उनसे परिचय नहीं था। मिलने की बहुत इच्छा रहो पर हिम्मत नहीं हुई। इस अपरिचय के विस्तार को जानकर फिर उस समाचार पर मैं इतना विफल और ठगा-लुटा-सा क्यों अनुभव कर आया इसके कारण का मैं अब तक समझना चाहता हूँ।

मृत्यु परिवार में भी हुई है और मैं उनको सह गया हूँ। लेकिन शरत्चन्द्र का अभाव और ये कि मैं कभी उनके दर्शन नहीं पा सका, न पा सकूँगा इसकी कचोट मन से दूर नहीं होती है।

उपन्यास भी मैंने लिखे पर उनको ऊँचा उपन्यासकार मानकर मुझे तृप्ति नहीं मिलती। उपन्यास को शिल्प मुझसे माना नहीं जाता। शिल्पकार और उत्कृष्ट लेखक कोई हो सकता हो तो होगा। इतने 'बैस्ट सेलर' आये दिन निकलते हैं पर उनके कर्ताओं के प्रति ऐसा आत्मीयभाव मुझमें तनिक भी नहीं है जो शरत् के प्रति आरम्भ से मैं अनुभव करता आया हूँ। उनकी रचनाएं चमत्कृत रचने की भाँति रह जाती हैं धीमे-धीमे मन के गहरे में उतर जाती हैं और मालूम होता है कि संसार और समाज की गुत्थियों को सुलझाना उनका काम नहीं है उन्हें तो बस उस तल को छेड़ देना है जहाँ हमारा अस्तित्व भाव आसन जमाये रहता है। वहाँ एक बार गहन सहानुभूति की पीड़ा व्याप जाये ऐसी कि कुछ काल के लिए स्वत्व भाव लुप्त हो रहे तो व्यक्ति एक धन्यता प्राप्त कर लेता है। जैसे उसमें आविष्कार हो आता है उस तत्त्व का, जहाँ तुम और उस का भेद नहीं रहता। उसका तुम अपने में पा लेते हो और तुम में वो आ बसता है।

शरत्चन्द्र इस तरह आत्मा के लेखक हैं। वह हठात् आपके आत्मीय बन आते हैं। बाहर से कोई उदबोधन, सम्बोधन आपको नहीं मिलता, शिक्षा नहीं मिलती, उपदेश नहीं मिलता। केवल आपका अन्तरंग ऐसा मध उठता है कि वासनाओं और कामनाओं का डक आपमें सो रहता है। और सारा अहंकार जंस गल पर आसू में बह जाता है।

इस भावुकता का लाभ? भाव विभोर होने से यही तो हाता है कि बाहरी कर्तव्यों का भान भूल जाये। साहित्य का दायित्व क्या यह नहीं है कि वो आपको जागृत, प्रबुद्ध करे? प्रश्न और समस्याओं की आरंभ ठले। उनके निराकरण की चेष्टा में आपको प्रवृत्त करे। जो उल्टे उस संबंध में आपको व्यथित और मथित तर्क भीतर से मत्तध कराता है, प्रेरित नहीं करता उसका यथार्थ मूल्य कितना हो सकता है।

और इसलिए रचनाएं आ रही हैं जो मानो धक्का देकर आपको उठा देना चाहती हैं, ठेलकर आपको नाना-आंदोलनों में उभाड़ डालना चाहती हैं। आपको बुद्ध और प्रबुद्ध करके आपमें से क्रिया और प्रक्रिया निकाल लेना चाहती हैं।

निश्चय ही शरत्चन्द्र की रचनाएं कृत प्रेरणा नहीं हैं। राजनीति को वे बल नहीं देती। कर्मोत्तजक वे हैं ऐसा आरोप कोई भी उन पर नहीं लाद सकता। लेकिन इसी से मेरी दृष्टि में उनका मूल्य स्थायी और गहरा है। उनमें आदमी अपने को पाता है। अपने आधार को पाता है और किसी बाहरी वेग अथवा आयेग में बहने की शका उसे नहीं रहता। कर्म के मोल में कामना और वासना नहीं रहती। सहानुभूति और सम्बेदना हो आती है।

इस प्रकार शरत्चन्द्र की गणना अपने नाते में महापुरुषों में करता हूँ। महापुरुष के जो आम-तौर पर लक्षण माने जाते हैं उनका वहाँ सर्वथा अभाव मिलता है। इतना अभाव कि शरत् दुर्वृत्ति और चरित्रहीन लग सकते हैं। उन्होंने कभी अपने को सामने लाने और लोगों की निगाहों में बहा दीखने की चेष्टा नहीं की। प्रत्युत चेष्टा की तो छोटे होने की। लेखक के रूप में हठात् जब उदय हुआ, तब उनको पता तक नहीं था। श्रष्टता उन पर थोपी गयी उन्होंने उसका अर्जन करने की इच्छा नहीं की। समाज के मंथान्त और प्रतिष्ठित वर्ग में जा बैठने की उनमें स्पृहा हो न जाग सकी। बड़े आदमी चढ़ते हैं और चमकते हैं। उन्होंने नीचे से नीचे छिपने में ही अपनी कृष्ण मानी। महापुरुषों के विपरीत यह व्यवहार उनको इस स्थिति में डाल गया कि लोगों की उत्सुकता उनके बारे में सतत बनी ही रहेगी। कभी शान्त नहीं होगी। उन्होंने कभी कुछ भी दुनिया के हाथ ऐसा नहीं छोड़ा जिसे कुंजी बनाकर उन्हें खोला और उछाड़ा जा सके। एक-एक जानकारी उनके संबंध में प्रयत्न से आविष्कृत और संग्रहीत करने को शेष रह जाती है। जीवन के वा सामान्य अर्थों में प्रत्यक्ष और सार्वजनिक नहीं है। वो गुप्त और निजी है। सर्वजन सुलभ और लोकप्रिय होने की कोई युक्ति वहाँ नहीं दीखती। मंच पर प्रगट होने से वो बचते हैं और उपदेष्टा के व्यासपीठ को अपनाना उनके लिए अशक्य है।

फिर उनकी महापुरुषता का रहस्य क्या है? रहस्य ये है कि वो अपने लिए नहीं जिये। अन्यान्य में और उनके लिए अपने को बाटते-बिखेरते रहे। नहीं जिये उसके अनुसार जिसे समाज की मयीदा कहा जाता है। जिये, उस संवेदना और सहानुभूति की प्रेरणा से जिसका उद्गम उन्होंने अपने में पाया। इसमें कुछ उनके लिए निषेध नहीं रहा। न बाहर से कोई विषय उनके पास आ पाया। उनकी आत्म-प्रेरणा उन्हें जगाती रही और अन्त में पाया गया कि वहाँ है जो समाजहित की दृष्टि से भी सबसे विश्वसनीय सिद्ध होती है। मैं मानता हूँ कि सांस्कृतिक भारत की सुरक्षा व उसके निर्माण में शरत्चन्द्र का योग शायद केवल गांधी से दूसरा है। गांधी में और उनमें बाहर से किसी प्रकार की भी समानता नहीं देखी जा सकती। गांधी महात्मा थे और जीवन काल में शरत् को अधिकांश दुर्वृत्ति और दुष्चरित्र ही माना जाता रहा। तो भी दोनों की प्रेरणाओं में एक ही तत्व काम कर रहा था और वो था प्रेम का स्वीकार। उस प्रेम का स्वीकार जिस पर ब्रह्माण्ड टिका है। क्या अनन्त तारागण नक्षत्र एक परस्पर आकर्षण के बल पर ही नहीं टिके हैं? वो तत्व है जो ससार को धारण करता चला आता रहा है। गांधी के समान शरत् ने भी अपने को उस तत्व के साथ तदगत् करने की चेष्टा की। शरत् में उस चेष्टा को नहीं समझ सका समाज का संभ्रान्त दर्ग और वे ही समझ पाए जो मान-गुमान के जगत में नहीं रहते। प्रकृत भाव से उन्हें स्वीकारा, उन्होंने जिनका स्थान समाज के तल में है। शिष्ट, सभ्य वर्ग को शरत् की आंतरिकता की प्रतीति हुई तब, जब उनकी रचनाओं के माध्यम से शरत् का आत्मदर्शन उन्हें प्राप्त हुआ। तब भी वे उन कृतियों के यथार्थ और शरत् के बाह्य जीवन के यथार्थ में उस समन्वय तत्व को देखने में असमर्थ रहे।

प्रेम को परमेश्वर का रूप मान लिया जा सकता है। वो है भी। लेकिन मुक्ति जब उससे मिलती है तब नाना बंधनों की सृष्टि भी उसी से होती देखी जाती है। यह संसार, वह कि जिस भ्रमसागर कहा जाता है, प्रेम की विषमता में से ही फलित होता है।

परस्पर आकर्षण में से ब्रह्माण्ड जन्मा है पर इसी में से विंगारियाँ भी उत्पन्न होती हैं। अपकर्षण भी यहीं से जन्म पाता है। बहुत ही जटिल और गहन संधान का प्रश्न है यह प्रेम। मैं मानता हूँ कि यदि शरत्चन्द्र समाज, राष्ट्र और विश्व के तात्कालिक प्रश्नों के संधान और समाधान में नहीं उतरे, एक प्रेम के प्रश्न के चारों ओर ही रमते घूमते हुए दिखायी दिये तो एक अनुसाधनिक वैज्ञानिक की दृष्टि से यह उचित ही है। वहाँ उन्होंने मान और प्रणय के द्वंद्व का निदान खोजा और परिणाम जगत के सामने रखा। ये सेवा तात्कालिक कर्म-व्यापार की दृष्टि से भले उपेक्षणीय दीखे पर उसका एक ध्रुव और स्थाई दृश्य है। मैं मानता हूँ कि भारत राष्ट्र को भावात्मक एकता का उन्होंने एक पुष्ट आधार दिया। राजनीतिक और सावैधानिक एकात्मता अधिक विश्वसनीय नहीं है। वहाँ तो सदा ही फटाव के बीज उगते-पनपते रहते हैं। क्या हमारे सामने ही भारतवर्ष फटकर दो नहीं हो गया? हो गया इस आधार पर कि इस्लाम अलग है, उसकी संस्कृति अलग है, इसलिए उसे अलग राष्ट्र की आवश्यकता है। ये अलग-पन और फिर उनके बीच द्वैतविग्रह का सिद्धान्त राजघरानों को बल देता आया है। शरत्चन्द्र इस अलग-पन के तथ्य के भीतर गए और उस सत्य को पाने की चेष्टा की जिससे दो अलग अस्तित्वा के बीच आकर आकर्षण, अपकर्षण में बदल जाता है अर्थात् इस आकर्षण के अपकर्षण के रूप में परिवर्तित होने में से ही यह अनिष्ट फलित हुआ।

हम जानते हैं कि प्रेम के साथ काम भी चलता है। यद्यपि काम प्रेमजन्य है उसका स्वतन्त्र अस्तित्व नहीं है फिर भी वो भोग की ओर जाता है। भोग में परस्पराकर्षण स्वीय नहीं रहता दुर्घसयी हो जाता है। इस प्रकार वो स्वत्व और स्वार्थ के द्वन्द्व की समस्या पैदा करता है। उसमें एक-दूसरे को अपने निमित्त काम्य और भोग्य बनाकर जैसे अपनी ही ओर से उनकी उत्कृष्ट सम्भावनाओं को दुःसह और दुर्भय कर देता है। शरत्चन्द्र ने इस जगह उस प्रेम की प्रतिष्ठा की जो कामार्त नहीं है, अपने भोगाधिक प्रयोजन में दूसरे को संप्राप्त कर लेना नहीं चाहता है। बल्कि जिसमें अगाध सत्यता है और जिसके निकट सेवा और तप की संप्राप्ति सर्वस्व है। शरत्चन्द्र में उत्सर्गशील और तपः पूत जिस प्रेम की प्रतिष्ठा है उससे समस्याएँ कटती हैं और स्वत्व का दश समाप्त हो जाता है। प्राप्ति की जगह मानो वहा आहुति ले लेती है। और जीवन का क्रम ही एक आंतरिक कृति-प्राकिया में से मथकर और घुलकर बदल जाता है। वो निरुत्तर आता है ऐसा कि 'मैं' - 'दोयम्' बनता है और 'वह' प्रथम हो आता है। इस प्रकार परस्पराकर्षण, परस्परोत्सर्ग में सार्थक और सम्पन्न होता है। वो चिन्गारी नहीं उपजाता। न दाह उत्पन्न करता है। प्रेम एक वो भी है जिसमें से 'गृहदाह' की सृष्टि होती है। जिसमें से विक्षिप्त उत्पन्न हो आती हो शरत् ने अपनी कृतियों में उस विषफल का दर्शन कराया है और स्पष्ट किया है कि प्रेमार्कषण को जिसने पूरे मन से स्वीकारा वह काम-विकलता के दश से सहज हो बच गया।

आकर्षण, विकर्षण और अपकर्षण में बदला जाता है जब हम प्रेम की पीड़ा से उसके भोग का महत्व देने लगते हैं। शरत्चन्द्र ने उस गुत्थी को इतनी ममता और मार्मिकता के साथ लिया और खोला है कि पाठक अनायास संस्कार-शालता की ओर उठता हुआ अनुभव कर आता है।

यहो रहस्य है कि शरत्चन्द्र अपनी सारी आवागामी और उद्दण्डता में भी कभी स्त्री को भोग्या के रूप में स्वीकार नहीं कर पाये। उसकी असहायकता उनको भीतर तक दहला गई और दया और वरुणा की जगह उनमें उसके प्रति श्रद्धा और अर्चना के भाव पैदा हुए। उनकी कृतियों ने समाज को दिखाया कि जिनको वहा गौरव और प्रतिष्ठा प्राप्त है उस गौरव-गर्व के नीचे कितनी असहायता और दीनता कुचली पड़ी हुई है। वो दैन्य आरोपित है और उन पर गर्विष्ठ भाव से बैठी हुई हृदय हीनता का परिणाम है अन्यथा उस दीनता में अन्तःसलिला सहृदयता को भी देखा जा सकता है। उन्होंने समाज की आखे खोलीं और बताया कि हृदय के अन्तः प्रसुप्त प्रेम को निकाल करके महत्वाकांक्षा की अन्धी गति में जो हम चले जा रहे हैं, हमारा समाज चला जा रहा है उस वेग की यथार्थता को समझने की आवश्यकता है। मनुष्यता के प्रति सम्मान हमें रखना है तो ये नहीं चलेगा। समाज के मूल्यों में क्रान्ति लानी होगी।

उनके समय में प्रकार-प्रकार के सुधार आंदोलन चल रहे थे। शरत्चन्द्र उन आंदोलनों में उखड़े नहीं, भटके नहीं। और उनकी निगाह समस्याओं के जड़-मूल से हट नहीं सकी। उनकी रचनाओं ने ऊपरी सम्वाद और विवाद को पार कर उस बुनियाद की तरफ हमारा ध्यान दिलाया है कि जो जड़ जर्जर रहे तो ऊपरी संभार मभल नहीं सकेगा। सतही उपचार काम नहीं देगा। मनुष्य-मनुष्य के बीच सवादिता के स्रोत को खोलना होगा। प्रतिष्ठा के आधार को बदलना होगा। सत्ता-सम्पदा नहीं होंगे मूल्य मानवता के। मूल्य तो उस अन्तस्थ प्रेम को ही मानना होगा जो उसे चाहता नहीं उसमें अपने को मिला देता है।

शरत्चन्द्र बंगला भाषा के लेखक थे लेकिन भारत की कौन भाषा है जिसमें पहुंच तो उसी में सर्वाधिक लोकप्रिय नहीं बन गये? अभी भारत से बाहर वो विशेष परिचित नहीं है। किन्तु मुझे याद है कि मैंने विदेशों में जाने पर डॉस्टोव्हस्की और टॉल्स्टोय के बाद विश्व साहित्य में उन्हीं का स्थान बताया था। अब भी मैं मानता हूँ कि आनुसंगिक इतर और अन्यान्य झमेलों में न फसकर शरत् को दृष्टि जो मूल-मर्म की ओर गयी है और उसी ध्रुव पर केन्द्रित रह गए है सो उस विधि उनके कृतित्व का वैभव ही प्रगट हुआ है। इस प्रकार अनायास मनुष्य के मर्मति मर्म को उन्होंने खोला और जाँचा है। बताया है कि स्त्री उसके लिए एक वरदान है यदि इसीलिए कि वो सहती है और सताती नहीं।

अन्त में मैं शरत्चन्द्र के प्रति करदछ अपनी श्रद्धाजलि अर्पित करता हूँ। जिन्हें जीवन में देख नहीं पाया इस कारण और भी अपने अन्तरतम में स्थिर पाता हूँ।

# Saratchandra : A tribute

Jainendra Kumar

I simply cannot describe the intensity of the shock I received when I was informed about the death of Saratchandra. I had never known him personally. Much as I longed to meet him, I could never gather courage to do so. Knowing well the extent of this lack of personal acquaintance, I am still at a loss to understand why I felt so distressed, so cheated, so lost.

There have been deaths in the family, and I have put up with them. But the anguish at the loss of Saratchandra and the feeling, that I never could, nor would ever in future, be able to see him, has never receded in me.

I too have written novels, but I do not feel satisfied by accepting him as a great novelist. I am unable to treat novel as a work of craft only. What if there be some novelists who could at a time be a great writer and also a craftsman ? So many 'best sellers' are being published every other day, but I have never been able to develop that close personal relationship with their writers as I have felt for him from the very beginning. His writings do not merely strike you. They, rather, gradually descend to the deepest recess of heart. It seems that he is not concerned with solving the manifold tangled problems of the world and society. He is content only with stirring that base where our 'ego' sits tight. If, for once, the sweet pain of deep sympathy were to cover that region, sufficient to make the feeling of 'self' to disappear for some time, man would attain perfect bliss and fulfilment. As if it leads to discovering that element which dissolves the duality of 'I' and 'you'. You find 'him' within yourself, and 'he' takes his abode within 'you'.

This is Saratchandra, the writer of the soul. He becomes your nearest one within a trice. Externally, you receive no inspiring sermon, no address, nor any teaching. Only your inner self gets churned up and the sting of your lusts and desires is dulled to sleep within you. And, as if, all your pride is melted and flows out with tears.

Of what use be this sentimentality ? When you are in a trance, all that happens is that you lose sense of your external duties. Is it not the duty of literature to arouse and enlighten ? To push you towards questions and problems ? To impel you to attempt to solve

them? Of what real value can be that which, on the contrary, leaves you stunned internally by paining and churning yourself and which does not inspire?

And, therefore, writings after writings are being published which, as though, want to push and elevate you; to drag you into various campaigns and movements, to extract both action and reaction out of you by annoying and frustrating you.

To be sure, Saratchandra's works do not inspire towards action. They do not strengthen *Politics*. None can accuse them of exciting you for action. But, for that very reason, they have a deep and permanent value in my eyes. Man discovers himself through them. He discovers his base and then no danger exists for him to be carried away by any external flow or sentiment. No desire or lust exists at the fountain-head of Action. Sympathy and Empathy alone arise therefrom.

In this way, I count, for myself, Saratchandra as a great man. All the apparently normal signs of great men are absolutely absent in him. Their absence is so acute that Saratchandra may even appear as an evil and 'characterless' person. He never tried to project himself to the front, nor to appear great in the eyes of people. Rather, he deliberately tried to diminish his stature. He never knew when he suddenly emerged as a writer. Eminence was thrust upon him. He never willed it for himself. The desire to join the ranks of the distinguished and respected persons of Society never did arise in him. Great men rise and shine. He deemed it safe for himself to hide in the lower and still lower depths. Such attempts on his part, so contradictory to that of great men, has placed him in a position where people's curiosity about him will continue for all times to come. It will never abate. He has not left with the world any such thing which might be used as a key to open and uncover him. Each single information about him remains to be assiduously discovered and collected. His life is not open and public. It is secret and personal. No machination to become popular and accessible to all can be discerned there. He avoids appearing on the stage and it is impossible for him to accept the pulpit of the sermon-giver.

What, then, is the secret of his greatness as a man? The secret lies in the fact that he did not live for himself. He offered himself to others and remained lost in them. He kept on distributing and scattering himself among the rest. He did not lead a life according to, what is called, the social etiquette. He lived by the inspiration of that sympathy and compassion which he found gushing out from within himself. In this, nothing remained forbidden to him. Nor could any 'legislation' reach him from outside. His self-inspiration kept him awake and, at last, it was found that it was that alone which proved most reliable, amongst all, from the point of view of social good as well.

I believe that Saratchandra's contribution towards the creation and preservation of cultural India is second, perhaps, only to that of Gandhi. No outward similarity whatsoever can be detected between him and Gandhi. Gandhi was a 'Mahatma', while in his lifetime Saratchandra was mostly dubbed only as a rake and a characterless person. Still one element alone was working in the inspirations of both of them and that was, acceptance of love; acceptance of that love upon which rests the entire universe. Do not the innumerable stars and planets exist only because of the mutual gravitational attraction? It is the element which has eternally been preserving the world intact. Like Gandhi, Saratchandra also tried to assimilate himself with that element. The 'respectable' section of the society could not understand that attempt of Saratchandra. They alone could grasp it who do not dwell in the world of tricky inhibitions. He accepted them who were ranked at the very bottom of the society, most naturally. The 'cultured' and 'civilised' classes could only realise the 'intimacy' of Saratchandra only when they could get the glimpse of

Saratchandra's true self through the medium of his works. Even then they were unable to discern the synthetic element which joined the truth of his writings and the truth of his external life.

Love might be accepted as the form of God. It actually is. But the moment one is freed from it, is also the moment which created a number of fresh ties out of it. This world, which is called Bhabasagar, flowers out only the oddity of love.

Universe is born out of mutual attraction. But sparks too take birth out of it. Repulsion also originates from here alone. This love is a subject-matter of a very complex and deep research. I believe that if Saratchandra did not try to locate and solve the immediate problems facing society, nation and the world, and was found rotating around the problem of love alone, it was justifiable from the point of view of a researcher, a Scientist. There he discovered the solution of duel between Prestige and Love and placed his findings before the world. Such a service may appear insignificant from an immediate-action point of view, but it is of an eternally permanent value. To my mind, he provided a healthy base for the emotional unity to the Indian nation. Political and constitutional unity is not to be believed much. Seeds of division are always being nurtured there. Was not India divided into two right before our eyes? It was divided on the basis that Islam is different, its culture is different, and, therefore, it requires a separate nation. This principle of separation and the duel of 'duality' inherent in it has been strengthening the ruling classes. Saratchandra entered deep inside this fact of separatism and tried to find out that truth which changes the attraction existing between two separate identities into repulsion i. e., this evil resulted only due to the mutual attraction changing into repulsion.

We know that sex, too, moves along with love. Although sex is rooted in love, and has no separate existence of its own, yet it leads to indulgence in sex. Sexual indulgence turns mutual attraction into lustfulness from personal relationship. It, thus, gives rise to the problem of clash between self and selfishness. By making each other objects of lust and desire for selfish ends, it makes their noble possibilities unbearable and fearsome. Saratchandra established in its place love that is not lustful and which does not want to possess for oneself the other for satisfaction of one's lust. Rather, it has unfathomable truth which has the sole object of service and penance. The self-sacrificing and sanctified love established in Saratchandra's works strikes out all problems and the sting of individual ego gets dissolved. Willing sacrifice replaces possession and attainment and the very life cycle changes its character having resolved and churned itself through an internal creative interaction. It so shines out that 'I' becomes secondary and 'He' acquires the first place. In this fashion does the mutual attraction achieve fulfilment in mutual sacrifice. It does not create any sparks, nor any burning sensation. There is a love out of which is created '*Gṛhadāha*'. Saratchandra has clearly revealed in his writings that poisonous fruit which leads to madness and has clarified that he who accepts this attraction of love with all his heart and soul, naturally saves himself from the sting of sex-lust.

Attraction changes into Repulsion and Apathy when we begin attaching greater significance to indulgence in it than to the pain wrought by love. Saratchandra has dealt with this knotty problem so lovingly and sympathetically that the reader begins to raise himself most normally towards cultured traditions.

Therein lies the secret why Saratchandra could never accept woman as an object of his lust despite all his vagrancy and high-handed ways. The helplessness of her position shook him to his roots and, in place of pity and compassion towards her, feelings of reverence and worship were roused in him. His writings showed it clearly to the Society how much helplessness and poverty lies crushed under the pride and glory of those who have attained prestige and honour

in it. That poverty is thrust upon them and is the logical result of the heartlessness squatting upon them with pride. Otherwise, one might also discern sympathy flowing deep under that poverty. He opened the Society's eyes and showed how much it is necessary to understand the reality of the force of the blind flow of ambitions in which we and our Society find ourselves tearing out love lying dormant in our heart. If we have to retain our respect for humanity, this will not do. We shall have to bring about a revolution in the Social values.

Various reformist movements were being carried out during his time. Saratchandra did not get uprooted or lost by those movements, and never did his sight deviate from the roots of the problems. His writings have directed our attention towards that basic fact ( after having tided over the dialogues and controversies being carried out on surface ) that if the root be tattered, it will not be able to bear the weight on top. Treating the surface will be of no use. We shall have to tear wide open the source of communication between man and man. We shall have to change the basis of respectability. *Power* and *Pelf* will not be the values of humanity. We shall have to regard that inner love alone which does not demand from others, rather, dissolves itself in it.

Saratchandra was a writer in Bengali, but where is that Indian language in which he did not become the most popular when he reached it ? He is not yet known much outside India. But I remember that during my foreign tours, I had ranked him just after Dostoyevsky and Tolstoi in world literature. Even now I believe that without embroiling itself in incidental and related controversies, Saratchandra's sight which has been directed towards the basic Truth, and where he has got it fixed permanently, has revealed the grandeur of his creativity. Through this he has uncovered and conquered the most sensitive aspect of man. He has shown how woman is a boon only because she bears patiently and does not torment.

Before concluding, I offer my most respectful homage to Saratchandra. I could never see him in life and for that reason find him all the more securely entrenched in the deepest recesses of my heart.

*Translated by Manmohan Thakore*





# शरत्चन्द्र-प्रेमचन्द :

## एक तुलनात्मक अध्ययन

इन्द्रनाथ मदान

शरत्चन्द्र और प्रेमचन्द, दो महान समकालीन कथाकार अपने युग के जीवन और उसकी समस्याओं को अपने अपन विशिष्ट ढंग से उजागर करते हैं। वे अपने युग का कलाकार की सवेदनशील दृष्टि और गंभीर विचारक के मन से व्यक्त करने हैं। किसी लेखक के सृजन का उसके जीवनबोध में अलग-गना गलत है। शरत्, उदाहरण के लिए, अपने उपन्यासों और कहानियों में विधवा के जीवन की यातना और दुख को उजागर करने में अपनी सृजनात्मक शक्तियों की गवाही देते हैं। इस से हटकर प्रेमचन्द किसानों की पीड़ाओं को इतनी तपस्वी से पेश करते हैं कि वह इनके शोषण पर कान्पने से लगते हैं। प्रेमचन्द भी पहले दिना के एक सुधारक के नाते उस क्रूर सामाजिक विधान से भी परदा उठाते हैं जो विधवा को अभागा जीवन जीने के लिए विवश करता है। वह पाठकों की सामाजिक ज़मीर का मात्र जगाने से सतोष का मास नहीं लेते, वह सामाजिक कुरातियों का क्रियात्मक समाधान देने के लिए उतावले हैं। शरत् इस तरह की सामाजिक समस्याओं को उठाने में अधिक समय से काम लेते हैं। इसमें सन्देह नहीं है कि विधवा का जीवन इनके कथन-साहित्य में केन्द्रीय विषय-वस्तु है। लेकिन वह सामाजिक सुधार के उत्साह में बह नहीं जाते। वह मुख्य रूप में चरित्र को उतारने में रुचि रखते हैं। प्रेमचन्द मुख्य रूप से सामाजिक समस्या में दिलचस्पी रखते हैं। इसलिए चरित्र और कथानक दोनों सामाजिक उद्देश्य के अधीन हैं। इस विषमता को वास्तव को उजागर करने के भिन्न दृष्टिकोणों में आका जा सकता है। इनकी सृजनात्मक प्रतिभा दो भिन्न दिशाओं में क्रियाशील है। किन्हीं दो सृजनात्मक लेखकों की तुलना करना इसलिए असंगत है कि इनकी पहचान और परस्पर इनके अपने-अपने तौर पर करना दो स्वतन्त्र इकाइयों के रूप में आकरना होता है।

जीवन और उसकी समस्याओं को दो भिन्न दृष्टिकोणों से आकने का परिणाम यह है कि शरत् की मुख्य रचि मानवीय सम्बन्धों को चित्रित करने में है। इनके उप-यास सीधे तौर पर सामाजिक और आर्थिक समस्याओं को नहीं उठाते, लेकिन पात्रों और स्थितियों में मानवीय सम्बन्धों को पेश करने में इन समस्याओं के सकेत प्रयोग करते हैं। स्थितियों से टकराहट उभरती है और विवेचन या सामाजिक कुरीतियों के उपचार के सकेतों के माध्यम से टीका-टिप्पणी नहीं करा गया है इसके दूसरी ओर प्रेमचन्द, जो देहात के दिल में जीते थे, लोगों के जीवन में सामाजिक और राजनीतिक परिवर्तन के प्रांत सवेदनशील रूप में सजग थे। इन्होंने देखा था कि किस तरह किसान चारों ओर गिद्धों से घिरे हुए थे जो इनका शिकार करते थे—ज़मींदारों के कारिन्दे, सुदखार, और पुलिस। प्रेमचन्द ने अपने उपन्यासों में इस युग के कथात्मक शब्द के माध्यम से उजागर किया, जबकि शरत्चन्द्र ने जीवन की टकराहटों को उजागर करने के नाट्यात्मक शब्द का उपयोग किया। इसलिए वह भारतीय कथा-साहित्य के लेखकों में सवाद की कला में शिरोमणि हैं। रवीश और सावित्री, किरण और उपेन्द्र, किरण और दिवाकर, अप्स और भारती के बीच सवाद अपनी आयरनी और नाट्यात्मक शक्ति के लिए स्मरणीय है। देवदास उप-यास की अपील मुख्य रूप से आयरनीगत शब्दों और नाट्यात्मक स्थितियों पर आधारित है। सुरेश और अचला अपने सशक्त मिथ-कथनों में आलोकित होते हैं। कमल और भारती की निजी बातचीत खूब चमकती है। राजलक्ष्मी और श्रीकान्त में सवाद गरिमा और शालीनता को लिए हुए है। कभी-कभी इन में आयरनी का पुट आ जाता है, लेकिन इन में कटुता नहीं है। इस तरह शरत् सवाद के माध्यम से अपने चरित्रों को उजागर करते हैं और उनकी मानसिक स्थितियों को आलोकित करते हैं जबकि प्रेमचन्द अपनी टीका और टिप्पणों से इस उद्देश्य को पूरा करते हैं। इस के अपवाद भी इनके उपन्यासों में मिल जाते हैं जैसे 'गोदान'।

प्रेमचन्द ने कथा-साहित्य में किसी परम्परा को विरासत् नहीं पाया था, इन्हें अपने शिल्प विधान का स्वयं विकास करना पड़ा था। इनके उपन्यासों को विविध संयोगों, अविश्वसनीय स्थितियों लंबे भाषणों, फालतू विवरणों से लुब्ध हुए कोई नहीं पढ़ सकता, लेकिन जैसे-जैसे इन की क्षमताओं का विकास होता गया वैसे-वैसे इन का उपयोग कम होता गया। इनकी कला इनको अवस्था के साथ विकास पाती गयी। प्रेमचन्द नैतिकता के विशेष मानक का निरूपण करत है और सामाजिक उद्देश्य तथा सामाजिक आलोचना की अभिव्यक्ति के लिए उपन्यास का माध्यम बनात है। इस तरह इनके उपन्यासों की केन्द्रीय अपील मुख्य रूप से सामाजिक है। इनके उपन्यासों में हर भोड़ पर वह सामाजिक अन्याय और दमन में घिरे हुए के पक्ष में भावुक टिप्पणी देते रहते हैं। शरत् के उपन्यास दूसरी ओर प्रेम-कहानियाँ हैं। यह इनके कथा-साहित्य का मूल स्वर है वह प्रेम के स्थायी और सचारी स्वरों को झकारने में अपनी सृजनात्मक शक्तियों का परिचय देते हैं। शरत् का विश्वास है कि प्रेम मानवीय स्वभाव का रूपान्तर कर सकता है। एक नारी का जीवन सार रूप में प्रेम पर आश्रित है। यह उमका समृद्धा अस्तित्व है। श्रीकान्त अपना प्रेयसी की संगत में पूरी तरह बलवान हो जाता है। सतीश प्रेम की जादूभरी शक्ति से बदल जाता है। जावानन्द, जो एक व्यभिचारी है, प्रेम के रूपांश में निस्तार पा लेता है। देवदास पूरी तरह टूट जाता है जब वह प्रेम से वर्णित हो जाता है। सुरेश अपनी प्रथमों की हाज़री में स्वयं को उठा हुआ पाता है। शरत् ने जहाँ महत्व और स्थान अपने उपन्यासों में प्रेम को दिया है उसमें यह धारणा छुपे हो जाती है कि इन्होंने जीवन में प्रेम की आन्तरिक क्षमताओं को गहनता से अनुभव कर लिया था। आम तौर पर नारी प्रेम में पहल करती है। अचला, भारती, कमल और किरण भी पहल करती हैं, लेकिन अलग-अलग कारणों से। वे सामाजिक स्तर पर मुक्त होने के कारण इस भूमिका को उदा करती हैं। इनके कथा-साहित्य में प्रेम का उजागर करने में विशेष भूमिका में काम लिया गया है जो इसका विशिष्ट पक्ष है।

प्रेमचन्द की कला हमारे लिए इसलिए महत्व नहीं रखती कि इन्होंने किसानों और निचले बीच के तबकों के बारे में लिखा है, बल्कि इसलिए उन्होंने अपने युग की प्रतिक्रियावादी शक्तियों के विरोध में लिखा है। वह इसलिए महान है कि इन्होंने लाखों किसानों की मनोदिशाओं और विचारों को संकट के समय अभिव्यक्ति दी है जब औद्योगीकरण या पश्चात्त्य सभ्यता गाँव के आर्थिक विधान को खदेड़ रही थी। इनकी पहलें की कृतियाँ मध्यवर्गीय समाज के सदस्यों में पुराने और नये मूल्यों से सम्बद्ध हैं जिनमें वह सुधार के पक्ष में हैं। सवासदन, प्रतिज्ञा, निर्मला उपन्यास बीच के तबकों के जीवन और इसकी समस्याओं का उजागर करते हैं। सामाजिक रोगों के लिए जिन उपचारों का इन्होंने सुझाव दिया है वे इनकी दृष्टि का परिणाम हैं। वे इनके जीवन बाध को उजागर करत हैं जिसका इन्होंने निम्नमध्य वर्ग का सदस्य होने के नाते विकास किया था, लेकिन फिर भी इन समस्याओं के बारे में इनका रुख क्रान्तिशील है। इन्होंने उपन्यासों की रचना केवल पाठकों के मनोरंजन के लिए नहीं की थी और नहीं सक्स और प्रेम की कथाओं के लिए लागा की जिज्ञासा को शांत करने के लिए। उपन्यास इनके लिए जीवन की कुछ सामाजिक, राजनीतिक और आर्थिक समस्याओं पर अपने विचारों की अभिव्यक्ति के लिए एक माध्यम था। इसलिए इनके उपन्यास सामाजिक उद्देश्य और सामाजिक आलोचना को लिए हुए हैं और ये उपन्यास के अन्य तत्वों पर हावी हैं। इनके अनुसार समस्त महान साहित्य अपने स्वभाव और वस्तु में प्रगतिशील होता है। वह उन फूलों को प्यार करते हैं जो फल देते हैं, उन बादलों को जो बरसते हैं। इन्होंने देहाती जीवन को अंकित करने में पहल की है और साथ ही इस जीवन का इसका विकास के विशेष काल में वर्णित करने में प्रगतिशील दृष्टि का परिचय किया है। ज़मीन का तोड़ने वाला या हल चलाने वाला आदमी शोषण का सबसे बुरा शिकार है। इन्होंने मध्यवर्ग के बारे में भी लिखा है जो प्रगतिवादी और प्रतिक्रियावादी दोनों था प्रतिक्रियावादी इसलिए कि वह अतीत का आदर्शिकरण इस वजह से करता था कि कुरूप वर्तमान का विरोध अतीत की पुनः रचना से हो सके जिसके लिए वह लालाचित था, और प्रगतिवादी इसलिए था कि वह अतीत की रुढ़ियों की कड़ी आलोचना करता था। प्रेमचन्द ने अपने को किसी विशेष विचारधारा के साथ नहीं बाँधा, लेकिन वह मूल रूप से मानववादी थे जिनकी मानव की गरिमा में गहरी आस्था थी। इस नाते वह उन सब शक्तियों का विरोध करते थे, सामाजिक और धार्मिक, जो मानव का अवमाननीकरण करती थीं। और यह सामाजिक उद्देश्य उनके मन में व्याप्त था और उनकी कला को अनुप्राणित करता था।

शरत् की प्रतिभा विघटनशील मध्यवर्ग समाज की टकराहट पर सूक्ष्म पकड़ और गहरी पहचान रखती थी। वह अपने चरित्रों में, पुरुषों और नारियों में, पुराने और नये के संघर्ष को उजागर करते हैं। इस के बावजूद कि उनकी मुख्य रुचि मानव (प्रेमचन्द) में नहीं व्यक्त है। वह व्यक्ति में इतनी व्यापक सार्थकता भर देते हैं कि व्यक्ति को अमर बना देते हैं। प्रेमचन्द की तुलना में इनके चरित्रों

का क्षेत्र सीमित है। इन्हें यह दोष देना कि वह अपने क्षेत्र में क्यों रहते हैं उतना ही असंगत है जितना यह दोष देना कि मानव-चित्र का चित्रकार पेड़ों के चित्र क्यों नहीं उतारता। प्रेमचन्द, जिनका पालन देहाती परिवेश में हुआ, अधिकतम सृजनात्मक तब है जब वह किसानों और बीच के तबके के लोग के बारे में लिखने है। शरत् मध्यवर्गीय भाषा की सतान थे। वह अपने जीवन-काल में आसपास के जीवन के बारे में अपनी बुनियादी धारणाएं बना चुके थे। पहले का धारणाए लेखक के सृजनात्मक जीवन में सब से अधिक स्थायी होती है। शरत् इसका अपवाद नहीं है। इनके कृतित्व का जावन्त अश्व वचन के प्रेम और इस में मोहभग के बारे में है। युवा विधवा के दुख और इसके प्रेम और जीवन के त्रासदीय परिणामों में सम्मिलित है। शरत् हर राग के संगीतकार नहीं है, लेकिन जिन रागों पर इनकी पकड़ है वे राग राज-राग है। श्रीकान्त और राजलक्ष्मी, मतीश और सावित्री, सुरेश और अचला, किरण और कमल, देवदास-पारवती और चन्द्रमुखी इन के स्मरणीय सृजन हैं। वह कभीने लागा क चित्र उतारने में सफल नहीं—बेणी घायाल और अन्य चरित्र असफल हैं। नारियों का चरित्र-चित्रण इनकी कला और प्रतिभा की उत्कृष्ट विशेषता है पीड़ित और तथाकथित पतित नारी को जानते और पहचानते थे जा इनका सहानुभूति की पारी थी। पारवती ( देवदास ) में कामना विवाह की है, मा के स्नेह की नहीं। वह विधवा भी नहीं है। वह शरत् के कथा-साहित्य के पहले क स्वर का ध्वनित करता है किशोर-प्रेम। राजलक्ष्मी प्रौढ़ प्रेम की प्रतिनिधि है पारवती और पारवती का उद्दाम प्रेम इस में आकार सयत बहाव में बदल गया है। यह समझना कठिन नहीं है कि इन नारियों का भीतरी समय और उठी सामाजिक चेतना संक्रमण काल में सामान्य बोध से रोमांटिक सचेतना में बदल गयी है।

इस में संदेह नहीं है कि शरत् का सृजनात्मक कल्पना का वरदान मिला है। लेकिन यह लगता है कि इनके कथा-साहित्य में अन्तिम चरण में यह मन्द पड़ गयी है। इसके विपरीत प्रेमचन्द सृजनात्मक लेखन के शिखर पर थे ( गोदान ) जब छप्पन साल की आयु में मौत इन्हें छीन कर ले गयी। इनके अन्तिम उपन्यास का नायक एक किसान है जिसे एक व्यक्ति के रूप में उतारा गया है। यह शायद दोनों हैं। होरी भी और किसान भी। यह उस आदमी की कहानी है जिसने जीवन की यातनाओं और कठिनाइयों को अनुभव किया है और फिर भी वह अपनी मानवीयता और उदारता को कायम रखे हुए है जो इन दोनों लेखकों के चरित्रों में साक्षि है। होरी का जन्म शीघ्र हो जाता है। आशा में अधिक पहले। श्रृण दिन-पर-दिन बढ़ता जाता है। एक दिन वह सड़क के किनारे गिर पड़ता है और रूनायु की थकावट से मर जाता है। उसकी श्मशान पर एक महाजन आता है, इस बार एक हृदयहीन ब्राह्मण के रूप में जो अपना श्रृण चुकाने की माग करता है। पण्डित दातादीन का कथन है—'अन्त आ गया है। होरी को बेवृण्ड जाने के लिए गाय का दान अपने हाथों से करना है। घर में न तो गाय है और न ही गाय के लिए पैसे हैं। घर में केवल बीस आने हैं। होरी की पत्नी यह खबर ला कर पुजारी के हाथ में रख कर कहती है, 'यह इन का गादान है।' वह बेसुध हो जाती है और उपन्यास का अन्त इस त्रासद कथन और दृश्य के साथ हो जाता है। यह प्रेमचन्द का बुनियादी अनुभव है जो इनकी कला को अनुप्राणित करता है। शरत् की कला पर युवा विधवा की पीड़ा और यातना हावी है जिसे वह इतनी बार दोहराते हैं कि यह इनके कथा-साहित्य का केन्द्रीय स्वर बन जाता है। राजलक्ष्मी सब जगह विद्यमान है। उन विविधताओं के बावजूद जो विभिन्न वस्तुओं और स्थितियों के लिए लाजमी है वह इनके चरित्रों की चित्रशाला में केन्द्रीय स्थान पा लेती है। भारतीय साहित्य में, विशेष रूप से भारतीय कथा-साहित्य में शरत् का स्थान सुरक्षित है। इन की कृतियों की बार-बार परखना आवश्यक है, उस प्रतिभाशाली की कृतियों के समान जो युग की बदलती सचेतना के अनुरूप आवश्यक होता है। प्रेमचन्द और शरत्चन्द्र दोनों कलात्मक हैं और कलात्मक न केवल अपने युगों के लिए सार्थक होते हैं, आनेवाले युगों के लिए भी सार्थक होते हैं।

# Saratchandra versus Premchand :

## A study in contrast

Indar Nath Madan

Saratchandra and Premchand, two contemporary great writers of fiction, reflected the life and problems of their age, each in his unique way. They reflected their epoch with the eye of sensitive artists and the mind of earnest thinkers. It is also wrong to separate the creative work of the writer from his outlook on life. Saratchandra, for instance, reveals his creative powers in reflecting the agony and pain of a widow's life in his novels and short stories. Premchand, on the other hand, reflects the woes of the peasants so acutely that he seems to tremble at their exploitation. Premchand, the reformist of early days has also exposed the ruthless social system which condemns widows to a miserable life. He is not satisfied merely with arousing the social conscience of his readers, he is eager to suggest a practical remedy for social evils. Saratchandra is much more restrained in his treatment of such social problems. The life of a widow no doubt is the central theme of his fiction ; but he is not carried away by a zeal for social reform. He is primarily interested in portraying character. Premchand is mainly concerned with a social problem. Both character and plot are subordinated to social purpose. This contrast can be discerned in their different approaches to the reflection of reality. Their creative urge functions in two different ways. It is irrelevant to compare the two creative writers as they are independent entities and they are to be recognised and evaluated in their own right.

As a consequence of different approaches to the reflection of life and its problems Saratchandra's main interest lies in the portrayal of human relationships. His novels do not directly pose social and economic problems ; but the problems are implied in the treatment of human relationships among characters and situations. The conflicts arise out of situations and little comment is offered either by way of interpretation or by way of suggesting remedies for social ills. Premchand, on the other hand, lived in the heart of the countryside and was sensitively aware of the social and political changes which were taking place in the life of the people. He had seen how the peasants were surrounded on all sides by vultures who preyed on them—Zemindar's agents, money lenders and police. Premchand reflected this epoch in his novels by employing the narrative word, whereas Saratchandra reflected the conflicts of life by

employing the dramatic word. He is, therefore, supreme in the art of dialogue among Indian writers of fiction. The dialogues between Satīś and Sābitrī, Kiraṇ and Upēndra, Kiraṇ and Dibākar, Apūrba and Bhārati are memorable for their irony and dramatic power. The appeal of *Dēbdās* chiefly depends on the ironical words and dramatic situations. Surēś and Achalā reveal themselves in their powerful understatements. Kamal and Bhārati are simply brilliant in their conversation. The dialogues between Rālakṣmī and Śrikānta are marked by dignity and grace. At moments they grow ironical ; but there is no bitterness in their speech. It is chiefly through the instrument of the dialogue that Saratchandra reveals his characters and illuminates their states of mind.

Premchand, on the other hand, inherited no tradition of fiction ; he had to develop his own technique. No one can read his novels without being irritated by strange coincidences, improbable situations, long harangues and superfluous descriptions ; but as his faculties matured he employed these devices less and less. His art grew as he grew in years. Premchand espouses a particular standard of morals and uses the novel to express social purpose and social criticism. The central appeal of his novels is predominantly social. At every turn in the novels, he offers a sentimental comment in favour of the victims of social injustice and oppression. On the other hand, all Saratchandra's novels are love stories. It is the central motif of his fiction. He reveals his creative powers in tones and undertones of love. Saratchandra believes that love can transform human nature. A woman's life is essentially based on love ; it is her whole existence. A woman's life is essentially based on love ; it is her whole existence. Śrikānta becomes all powerful in the presence of the woman he loves. Satīś is transformed by the magical power of love. Jibānanda, the rake, is redeemed by a touch of love. Dēbdās is completely undone when love is denied to him. Surēś feels galvanised in the presence of the woman he loves. The importance and space that he has assigned to love in his novels confirm the opinion that he has deeply realised the inner potentialities of love in life. It is generally the woman who takes the initiative in love. Achalā, Bhārati, Kamal, and Kiraṇ also take the initiative, but for different reasons. They are socially emancipated to play this role. A remarkable restraint in the treatment of love is a unique feature of his fiction.

Premchand's art is of importance to us not because he wrote of the peasants and lower middle class, but because he wrote against the reactionary forces of his age. It is great because he expressed the mood and ideas of millions of peasants during a period of crisis when industrialisation or Western civilisation was disrupting village economy. His early works are mostly concerned with the old and new values in the ranks of middle class society where he stands for reform. *Sēbāsadan*, *Pratijñā*, *Nirmalā* are novels which reflect middle class life and its problems. The remedies that he has suggested for the social ills are highly characteristic of him. They reveal his outlook which he developed as a member of the lower middle class and yet he was radical in his approach to these problems. He did not write novels merely for the entertainment of his readers, or to satisfy the curiosity of men and women for stories with problems of sex and love. Novel was a medium of expression for his ideas on some of the social, political, and economic problems of life. His novels embody, therefore, social purpose and social criticism. They dominate over other elements in the novel. According to him all great literature is progressive by its nature and content. He loves only those flowers which bear fruit and clouds which bring rain. He is a pioneer in dealing with rural life ; and he has revealed a progressive attitude to the treatment of this life at a particular time of its growth and development. The tiller of the soil or the man with the hoe is the worst victim of exploitation. He has also written of the middle class which was both progressive and reactionary because it idealised the past as a reaction against the ugly present and

longed to reconstruct it ; and progressive because it was highly critical of the past conventions. Premchand did not align himself with a particular ideology ; but he was essentially a humanist who had profound faith in the dignity of man. As such he opposed all those forces, social and religious, which dehumanised man. And this was the social purpose which permeated his mind and inspired his art.

Saratchandra's genius is marked by a finer grasp of the conflict and a deeper understanding of the middle class society in a state of disintegration. He embodies in his characters, both men and women, the conflict between the old and the new. In spite of the fact that he is mainly concerned with individual persons rather than with the typical man, he charges them with such a universal significance that he immortalises them. His range of characters is limited as compared with Premchand's range. To blame him for staying inside his range is as irrelevant as to blame a portrait painter for not giving us any picture of trees. Premchand, who was brought up in the rural environment, is, therefore, most creative when he writes about the peasants and lower middle class people. Saratchandra was the son of middle class parents. It was in the period of his youth that he formed fundamental impressions of life around him. First impressions are the most durable in the creative life of a writer. Saratchandra is no exception to it. The most living part of his work is concerned with childhood love and its frustration ; with the suffering of a young widow and the tragic consequences of her love and life. Saratchandra is not a player of many notes ; but those he has are master strokes. Śrīkānta and Rājīlakṣmī, Satīś and Sābitrī, Surēś and Achālā, Kiraṇ and Kamal, Dēbdās and Pārbatī and Chandramukhī are his memorable creations. He is seldom successful at drawing people who are mean—Bēṇī Ghōṣāl and the like are failures. The characterisation of women is an outstanding feature of his art and genius. Saratchandra had known the suffering woman, the so-called fallen woman, who won his sympathy. Pārbatī (*Dēbdās*) has more of a matrimonial desire than of motherly love in her. She is also not a widow. She represents the earlier phase of his fiction—adolescent love. Rājīlakṣmī represents maturity of love—the torrential passion of Pārbatī and Dēbdās has changed into the even flow of love in her. It is not difficult to understand the innate conservatism and heightened social consciousness of these women in the age of transition from the medieval to the romantic sensibility.

Saratchandra, no doubt, is gifted with creative imagination ; but it seems to dwindle in the final phase of his fiction. Premchand, on the other hand, was at the height of creative writing (*Gōdān*) when he was snatched away by death at the age of fifty six. The hero of his last novel is a peasant who has been portrayed as an individual character. He is perhaps both a typical and individual peasant. It is the life story of a man who has experienced the suffering and hardship of life ; and yet who has been able to retain his essential humanity and charity which are common in the characters of both these writers. Hari's end comes soon, sooner than one can expect. The debt goes on piling day after day. One day he collapses on the roadside, and dies of nervous exhaustion. At the time of his death, a money lender comes, this time in the guise of a heartless 'Brahmin' to demand his pound of flesh. Paṇḍit Datādin says : "The end has become. Let Hari give away a cow with his dying hand to deserve salvation." There is no cow in the house ; nor is there any money for it. There are only twenty annas in the house. Hari's wife brings this amount and puts it in the hands of the priest and says : "This is his *godan*". She faints and the novel ends with this terrible statement and scene. It is this fundamental experience which has inspired his art. Saratchandra's art is haunted by the suffering and agony of the young widow and he repeats this theme so often that it strikes the fundamental note in his fiction. Rājīlakṣmī is present everywhere. In spite of variations which are inevitable to suit different social contents and situations, she occupies the central place in the

gallery of his characters. Saratchandra's place in Indian literatures, especially in Indian fiction, is secure. His works are bound to be interpreted again and again like the works of any genius according to the changing sensibility of the age. Premchand and Saratchandra are both classics, and classics are relevant not only for their age but for ages to come.





# हिन्दी साहित्य और शरत्चन्द्र

विष्णु प्रभाकर

हिन्दी साहित्य का क्षेत्र इतना व्यापक और विस्तृत है कि शरत्चन्द्र ने उसे कहा तक प्रभावित किया, यह एक ग्रन्थ का विषय हो सकता है, लेख का नहीं। इस बात से कोई इंकार नहीं कर सकता कि भले ही प्रारम्भ में अंग्रेजी या दूसरी भाषाओं की कुछ कृतियों के अनुवाद हिन्दी में आये हों परन्तु उसके बाद बंगला की रचनाओं के हिन्दी रूपान्तर ही सबसे अधिक हुए। बंगला का उपन्यास साहित्य भारतीय भाषाओं में सबसे अधिक समृद्ध था। इसलिए "समग्र रूप से बंगला उपन्यासों का हिन्दी उपन्यासों पर बहुत बड़ा ऋण है। उन्होंने हिन्दी भाषाभाषी जनता और लेखकों की रुचि संस्कार करने में बहुत सहायता की। हिन्दी की औपन्यासिक शैली को भी बंगला ने अक्सर नई भावभंगी सिखलाई है।" (विजयशंकर मल्ल, आलोचना-उपन्यास अंक-अक्टूबर, १९५४)

प्रेमचन्द के आते आते हिन्दी में मौलिक लेखन आरम्भ हो चुका था। समस्यायें प्रायः वही थीं जो बंगाल के उपन्यासकारों ने प्रस्तुत की थीं। इस युग में उपन्यासों की सामाजिक चिन्ता का एक बहुत बड़ा भाग नारी-जीवन की विषमताओं और उसके विभिन्न प्रतिशोधों से संबंधित है। इनसे हिन्दी उपन्यास प्रारम्भ से ही परिचित है...परन्तु प्रेमचन्द के द्वारा इन समस्याओं को विस्तृत और गम्भीर चिन्तन-भूमि मिली और उनके चित्रण भी रोमांसमूलक न होकर वस्तुनिष्ठ और अपेक्षाकृत व्यापक थे...प्रेमचन्द ने जहाँ काठिन्य को अपनाया और सामाजिक प्रश्नों पर शरत्चन्द्र की भावुक दृष्टि को बचाया वहाँ कलाकारों का एक वर्ग शरत्चन्द्र की रचनाओं को आदर्श बनाकर चला और उनमें काठिन्य के स्थान पर करुणा और गतिदायिता का प्राधान्य रहा। 'तपोभूमि', 'परख' और 'जैनेन्द्र' के परवर्ती उपन्यासों में यही शरत्चन्द्रीय भावुकता मिलती है।

अवैध प्रेम और स्वजाति रति जैसी समस्याएँ हमारे उपन्यासकारों ने नहीं उठाई हैं परन्तु जहाँ सामाजिक समस्याएँ सामने आयी हैं वहाँ किकर्तव्य स्थिति और आत्मघाती वेदना का वह रूप हमारे सामने नहीं आता जो शरत्चन्द्र के 'देवदास' और 'गृहदाह' जैसे उपन्यासों का विषय है। हिन्दी की भूमि कुछ अधिक कठोर है और उसमें चुनौती का स्वर अधिक मुखर और सशक्त है। (ड० रामरतन भटनागर आलोचना-उपन्यास अंक-अक्टूबर, १९५४)

स्वयं प्रेमचन्द ने जैनेन्द्र से कहा था, "मैं बंगाली नहीं हूँ, वे लोग भावुक हैं। भावुकता से जहाँ पहुँच सकते हैं वहाँ मेरी पहुँच नहीं। मुझ में उतनी देन नहीं। ज्ञान से जहाँ नहीं पहुँचा जाता वहाँ भी भावना से ही पहुँचा जाता है लेकिन जैनेन्द्र, मैं सोचता हूँ काठिन्य भी चाहिए...रवीन्द्र और शरत् दोनों महान हैं पर हिन्दी के लिए क्या वही रास्ता है, शायद नहीं। हिन्दी राष्ट्रभाषा है। मेरे लिए तो वह राह नहीं ही है।"

नये लेखकों ने तो 'शरत्' की आसुओं की बाढ़ की तीव्र निन्दा की पर प्रेमचन्द की 'निर्मला' क्या कम आसुओं की अपेक्षा करती है। शरत् ने नारी की जिस व्यथा और वेदना के चित्र उकेरे हैं, वैसे ही क्या 'निर्मला' में नहीं हैं ?

शरत्चन्द्र को समझने का प्रयत्न पुरानी पोढ़ी के हिन्दी साहित्यकारों ने बहुत ईमानदारी से किया। सर्वश्री शान्तिप्रिय द्विवेदी, रामस्वरूप चतुर्वेदी, इलाचन्द्र जोशी, जैनेन्द्र कुमार, ड० इन्द्रनाथ मदान, मन्मथनाथ गुप्त ये कुछ जाने माने प्रतिष्ठित नाम हैं जिन्होंने

शरत्चन्द्र की मनोवैज्ञानिक 'एप्रोच' सहज सरल पर व्यापक जीवन दृष्टि, गहरी अन्तरानुभूति, अगाध मानवीय करुणा की मुक्तकण्ठ से प्रशंसा की है। डॉ० मदान मानते हैं कि "उनके प्रेम तथा करुणा की एयोति मध्यवर्गीय समाज के अंधकार में प्रकाश की एक मात्र रेखा बन कर जगमगाती है।" जैनेन्द्र कहते हैं, "समाज मानव संबंधों को लेकर बनता है। शरत् ने उन संबंधों के भीतर भावना की उष्णता और आदरता पहचानी। समाज से भिन्न पदस्थ लोगों को उसने मानवता के पैमाने से नापा और नापना बताया... शरत् में विस्तार कम है तो घनता उस कमी को पूरा कर देती है। तात्त्विक गहनता उतनी नहीं है तब प्रसाद सविशिष्ट है। उनकी रचनाओं में, कहना कठिन हो जाता है, कि कौन शरत् को विशेष प्रिय है, कौन नायक है, कौन प्रतिनायक, कौन खल, जान पड़ता है जैसे सब बस स्वयं है।"

उनकी लोकप्रियता के प्रमाणस्वरूप उनकी रचनाओं के अनुवादों की चर्चा की जा सकती है। सुना है सन् १९१९ से १७ प्रकाशकों ने १७ अनुवाद छापे। वे कितनी संख्या में बिके इसकी कल्पना ही की जा सकती है। इधर उनको तथा प्रेमचन्द और जैनेन्द्र को लेकर तुलनात्मक दृष्टि से कई प्रबन्ध लिखे गये। प्रकाशित अभी एक ही हुआ है। (प्रेमचन्द और शरत् के उपन्यास—डॉ० सुरेन्द्रनाथ तिवारी) हिन्दी उपन्यासकारों पर उनका कैसा और कितना प्रभाव पड़ा इसकी गहरी खोज डॉ० जगन्नाथ ओझा ने की है। हिन्दी के छायावादी आलोचक डॉ० नगेन्द्र स्वीकार करते हैं, "गद्य के क्षेत्र में रवीन्द्रनाथ का प्रभाव आरम्भ से ही बहुत कम रहा... आगे चल कर इस विवेक सम्मत उपयोगितावादी दृष्टिकोण के विरुद्ध जब हृदय की कोमल वृत्तियों ने विद्रोह किया तब भी शरत् की आत्मपीडनमयी कला की भीगा प्रभाव ही भारतीय उपन्यास ने अधिक ग्रहण किया... इस प्रकार भारतीय उपन्यास विचार के क्षेत्र में गान्धी, मार्क्स तथा फ्रायड का और कला के क्षेत्र में प्रेमचन्द, तारुस्ताय, शरत् तथा लारेन्स आदि का जितना ऋणी है उतना रवीन्द्रनाथ का नहीं। (अनुसन्धान व आलोचना—डॉ० नगेन्द्र)

शरत्चन्द्र की तथाकथित 'आत्मपीडनमयी कला' का प्रभाव जैनेन्द्र पर किस सीमा तक हुआ उसकी विषय चर्चा नलिन विलोचन शर्मा ने की है, "जैनेन्द्र में वस्तुतः हिन्दी ने एक शरत्चन्द्र के अभाव की पूर्ति पा ली। हिन्दी भाषी क्षेत्र के पिपठित्सु पाठक उन दिनों राजनैतिक और आर्थिक परिस्थितियों के कारण और अपनी सांस्कृतिक एवं बौद्धिक वयःसन्धि के फलस्वरूप अपरिणत, कुण्ठाग्रस्त और भावुकता के शिकार थे। प्रेमचन्द ने शरत्चन्द्र की तरह स्त्रीभाव को अपनाने में अपनी अरुचि कबूल की थी। कुछ छायावादियों ने, विशेष रूप से गौण छायावादियों ने, काव्य के माध्यम से शरत्चन्द्र की अश्रुपंकिल भावुकता का समावेश हिन्दी में किया था, पर वह अपर्याप्त सिद्ध हुआ था। उनकी अव्याख्येय पाँड़ा को तुलना में जैनेन्द्र के आत्मपीडन सुख के लोभी पात्रों की कारुणिकता खूब ही लोकप्रिय हुई। फिर भी यह उल्लेखनीय है कि इस फन के उस्ताद शरत्चन्द्र की अनुदित पुस्तकें इस जमाने में जितनी संख्या में बिकी उसकी तुलना में जैनेन्द्र की भी लोकप्रियता नगण्य थी।

यदि जैनेन्द्र ने 'परख' या 'त्यागपत्र' आदि उपन्यास ही लिखे होते और 'सुनीता' नहीं लिखी होती तो वे शरत्चन्द्र की छाया-मात्र बन कर रह जाते। किन्तु जिस तरह 'गोदान' लिख कर प्रेमचन्द अपने दूसरे उपन्यासों की औसत से अच्छी साधारणता से बहुत ऊपर उठ सके थे उसी तरह जैनेन्द्र 'सुनीता' के लेखक के रूप में शरत्चन्द्र को छाया से अधिक महत्व के अधिकारी बन जाते हैं। (आलोचना-उपन्यास अक-अक्टूबर, १९५४)

उपरोक्त दोनों विद्वानों ने शरत् के प्रति जो भावना प्रगट की है वह सम्मानसूचक नहीं है। कुछ नये आलोचकों ने तो और भी अनादरपूर्ण शब्दों में उनकी चर्चा की। किसी ने उन्हें 'नियति-आसू-आदर्श मानवता के रोमांटिक सपनों का घुटन' का कलाकार कहा तो किसी ने 'नपुंसक और बिना जड़ा के पुरुष पात्रों का स्रष्टा'। दादा-दीदीवाद का आरोप भी उन पर लगाया गया।

शरत् साहित्य में जिस प्रेम का चित्रण हुआ है उसमें सेक्स अप्रासागिक है। यही बात आधुनिक लेखक को खलती है। बिना प्रसंग को समझे वह 'छी, छी' कर उठता है, 'सेक्स से यह भय क्यों?' इसमें सन्देह नहीं कि अनेक लेखकों ने उनके आत्मपीडन वाले प्रभाव को ही अधिक ग्रहण किया। उनकी अन्तरस्पर्शी अनुभूति, सूक्ष्म सम्येदन, विलक्षण मार्मिकता तथा मानविक मर्यादा पर आधारित यथार्थ सामाजिक दृष्टि के स्थान पर अश्रुपंकिलता और आत्मघाती वेदना का प्राधान्य रहा। उनके समकालीन हिन्दी साहित्यकारों

की बात छोड़ भी दें तो भी उनके 'देवदास' ने नये लेखकों को कैसे प्रभावित किया, इसके दो उदाहरण देना पर्याप्त होगा। आज के एक प्रबुद्ध लेखक श्री सिद्धेश का एक उपन्यास है 'पारो'। उसकी रचना प्रक्रिया की चर्चा करते हुए वे कहते हैं,—

"जब पारो की संरचना हुई थी, उस समय मेरी उम्र लगभग इक्कीस वर्ष की रही होगी—याने निहायत कच्ची और भावुक मन : स्थितियों की—इसका पूरा आलेखन हुआ था। मैं बी०ए० पास करने के बाद शाहाबाद जिले के ही एक कस्बे में बंकार बैठा इसके ताने बाने बुन रहा था। ... पास ही स्टेशन था और थोड़ी दूर पर एक बाजार भी। बाद का अधिकांश इलाका गांव की तरह वीरान पड़ा हुआ था—वहाँ का सबसे बड़ा बड़ा आकर्षण था एक नदी। वहाँ तट पर जाकर कुछ समय तक अपने आप में डूबा भी हूँ—निहायत रेत भरी जमीन और दूर-दूर तक वीरानी। पास ही शिवालय का एक पुराना मन्दिर और एक वटवृक्ष था। सारा वातावरण मिलाकर शरत् के उपन्यास के नायक देवदास की याद दिला देता था। मगर पारो ( पार्वती ) के बारे में सोचते हुए लगा कि वह यहाँ कहीं दफन है। वह अपने बारे में कहने के लिए कुछ भी नहीं छोड़ गयी। देवदास तो अपने जाँत जो बहुत कुछ कह गया कर गया और पारो के रहते हुए वह चला भी गया। मगर बाद में पारो का क्या हुआ ? एक शाम के धुंधलके में मुझे लगा कि पारो के रोने की आवाज मेरे अन्तर्मन तक पहुँच रही है—और इसी पागलपन में मैं भी उस शाम अन्दर ही अन्दर खूब रोया था। रात भी परेशान रहा। दूसरी सुबह से 'पारो' की रचना आरम्भ हुई।

इससे पूर्व शरत् को बहुत कम पढ़ा था। शरत् का स्वरूप अगर मेरे सामने था भी तो वह मात्र 'देवदास' उपन्यास को लेकर ही था। शायद शरत् के और भी दूसरे उपन्यासों को पढ़ लेता तो सम्भव था कि इस 'पारो' की रचना नहीं होती। क्योंकि भाषा, कथ्य और नारीस्वरूप की पूरी रूपरेखा इसी देवदास उपन्यास के ही करीब पड़ती है ...।"

मूल्यों की तलाश में व्याकुल एक और सुपरिचित लेखिका श्रीमती दीप्ति खण्डेलवाल की एक कहानी है—'पारो-पुरवैया'। नाम स्वयं में संकेतात्मक है। प्रेम में बार बार छली गयी, उसकी नायिका सुधा ( जिसे उसकी सखि प्यार से पुरवैया कह कर पुकारती है ) कहती है—

"दीदी, लेकिन विजू ने भी छला है मुझे। जब से यहाँ आयी हूँ विजू भी छिन गया है मुझ से। मैं बार बार पत्र लिखती हूँ तो मुश्किल से उसका कोई एक पत्र आता है ...और मुझे लगता है मैं फिर होश खोने लगी हूँ ...फिर डूबने लगी हूँ ...विजू खो गया तो मैं भी खो जाऊँगी।"

"सुधा ...पुरवैया ...।" मैं कांपते हाथों से उसका मुखड़ा सहला रही थी।

"पुरवैया नहीं-पारो, दीदी। ...मेरा कोई देवदास नहीं बन पाया लेकिन मैं पारो बन कर रह गयी हूँ।" सुधा की सिसकियां तेज हो गयी। ( कड़वे सच-दीप्ति खण्डेलवाल-पृष्ठ ५१ )

इन दोनों उद्धरणों में भावुकता का प्राधान्य है। देवदास की आत्मघाती भावुकता की शरत् ने स्वयं भी निन्दा की है परन्तु सच यह है कि मात्र भावुकता ही नहीं है देवदास में। जेनेन्द्र ने लिखा है, "वियोग को देवदास और भी पूरी तरह स्वीकार कर सकता तो उसके जैसा योगी पुरुष उपन्यास-साहित्य में दूसरा पाना कदाचित ही सम्भव रह जाता। उस कोटि तक नहीं पहुँचा, इसलिए क्या हम आसानों से अपनी आँखों को धोखा दे लेंगे। जिस अंश में उसने उस वियोग को स्वीकार किया और अधिक अंश में किया, उस अंश तक वियोग उसे प्रसाद ही बना और उसमें देवदास ऊँचा उठा। देवदास पार्वती की अलख जगाये रहा, लेकिन जब विवाहित पार्वती रात्रि के एकान्त में सम्पूर्णभाव से उसके प्रति अपना आत्मार्पण निवेदन कर उठी तब निविड़ अधमावार से घिरे देवदास ने क्या किया ? क्या पार्वती को लिया, लिया नहीं। मूर्ति की भाँति उसे अपने से दूर ही रखा। मूर्ति की भक्ति उसने अपने लिये चाही। मूर्ति पाने की स्पर्धा नहीं की। ( आवारा मसीहा-द्वारा संस्करण-पृष्ठ १८२ )

इसके अतिरिक्त एक और अर्थ है शरत् साहित्य का। प्रेम वहाँ है जथाह-अगम पर जिस प्रेम को समाज स्वीकृति नहीं देता उसे शरत् भी मिलन से महिमान्वित नहीं करते। प्रेम आरोपित नहीं किया जा सकता है, वह समाज के अन्तर से फूटना चाहिए। ऐसा

नहीं होता तो समाज दोषी है, समाज के विधि विधान दोषी है, लेखक नहीं, पात्र भी नहीं। शरत् ने हिन्दू समाज की इसी निरंकुशता को अपने पात्रों की व्यथा और वेदना और व्यर्थता के माध्यम से बार बार चित्रित किया है। लेकिन अधिकांश लेखक और आलोचक इसे आत्मघाती भावुकता कहकर ही चुक गये। शरत् के अन्तर में झांकने की चेष्टा बहुत कम लोगों ने की।

पंजाबी के प्रसिद्ध उपन्यासकार नानक सिंह ने स्वीकार किया है कि वे शरच्चन्द्र के पात्रों व शिल्प से प्रभावित नहीं थे लेकिन लिखने की प्रेरणा उन्हें वही से मिलती थी।

इसी प्रकार किसी न किसी रूप में प्रेमचन्द के बाद अनेक कृतिकार शरत्चन्द्र से प्रभावित थे। उनमें प्रमुख थे—सर्वश्री चतुरसेन शास्त्री, विश्वभरनाथ शर्मा कौशिक, भगवतीप्रसाद वाजपेयी, इलाचन्द्र जोशी, जैनेन्द्रकुमार, अज्ञेय, द्विजेन्द्रनाथ मिश्र निर्गुण, कमलाकांत वर्मा, फणीश्वरनाथ रेणु, सत्येन्द्र शरत, योगेश, दीप्ति खण्डेलवाल, सिद्धेश, नरेश मेहता और स्वयं लेखक। यशपाल की प्रारम्भिक रचनाएं 'देशद्रोही' और 'दादा कामरेड' इस परिधि से बाहर नहीं हैं। सिद्धेश तो यहां तक कहते हैं, "इसके बाद भी आधुनिक सन्दर्भों में भोग कर लिखने वाले नारी चेतना के लेखक राजकमल चौधरी भी रहे हैं। भले ही शरत् के आदर्श के सम्पादक के रूप में नहीं तो उस टूटन को तो उन्होंने भी भोगा ही है।"

इस प्रकार तो न जाने कितने आधुनिक लेखक शरत् के शृंगी होंगे। एक और आलोचक ड० बेवन तो यहां तक कहते हैं, "शरत् के पात्रों एव उपन्यासों की करुणा हिन्दी उपन्यास पर अब भी हावी है। यशपाल और अमृतराय जैसे लेखक भी मानव के पर्यवेक्षण में शरत् और रवीन्द्र से नहीं आगे जा पाये।" श्री उपेन्द्रनाथ 'अशक' की मान्यता के अनुसार तो शरत् साहित्य के प्रखर आलोचक राजेन्द्र यादव की रचनाओं में भी शरत्चन्द्रोप दीदी-दादावाद कहीं खुले कहीं छद्म रूप में मिल जायगा। लेकिन प्रभाव आखिर है क्या? कैसे और किस रूप में हम उसे ग्रहण करते हैं? क्या मात्र समान वातावरण और समान मानसिकता ही वे कारण हैं जो हमें किसी के प्रति आकर्षित करते हैं? क्या नयापन हमें प्रभावित नहीं करता? क्या किसी की व्यर्थता और हताशा हमें सार्थकता और आस्था की ओर उन्मुख नहीं करती?

जो विद्वान शरत् के प्रभाव को नगण्य मानते हैं, वे भी यह अवश्य स्वीकार करते हैं—"शरत् ने सामाजिक जीवन या नारी विषयक मान्यताओं को लेकर एक ऐसी मानसिकता जकड़ निमित्त की है, जिसमें प्रेमचन्द के बाद के उपन्यासकार जैनेन्द्र, अज्ञेय, या कि इलाचन्द्र जोशी अपने चरित्रों को विकसित करते रहे, पर सीधा और सजग प्रभाव में परिलक्षित नहीं कर पाता। 'त्याग-पत्र' 'शेखर', 'संयासी' में पुरुष-नारी के संबंधों की स्थिति शरत् की पृष्ठभूमि के बिना अधूरी लगती है, इतना ही शायद कहा जा सकता है।" (ड० रामस्वरूप चतुर्वेदी द्वारा लिखित लेखक को एक पत्र से।)

नगण्य हो या सम्पूर्ण, यह 'इतना ही' महत्वपूर्ण है हम कितना ही आगे बढ़ गये हो, पर घनात्मक और ऋणात्मक दोनों दृष्टियों से शरत्चन्द्र ने हिन्दी-कथा-साहित्य को प्रभावित किया है, प्रेरित तो किया ही है। लेकिन ड० रामस्वरूप चतुर्वेदी का यह कहना बहुत सही है कि उनके प्रभाव को हमने सजग होकर कम, भावुक होकर अधिक ग्रहण किया है। हमने यह समझने का प्रयास नहीं किया कि वे प्रेम के चित्रण और भावों की सघनता को खर देने में अदभुत संयम से काम लेते हैं। 'श्रीकान्त' नपुंसक और बिना जड़ों का व्यक्ति नहीं है, वह उस व्यक्त के मानसिक अनुभवों का प्रतीक है जो सामाजिक संघर्ष के युग में अन्तः प्रेरणा और परम्पराओं के बीच छटपटा रहा है। जो समाज की प्राचीन और नवीन व्यवस्था के संघिकाल में जीवन की पुरातन तथा परिवर्तनशील शक्तियों के बीच लटक रहा है। (ड० इन्द्रनाथ मदान) स्वयं शरत् 'राजलक्ष्मी' के बेकाबू हृदय और सजग धर्मवृत्ति के बीच द्वन्द्व की ओर बार बार संकेत करते हैं।

लेकिन शरत् को समझने का प्रयत्न बिल्कुल ही नहीं हुआ यह मानना भी गलत होगा। जैनेन्द्र ने बेलाग होकर लिखा, 'शरत् ने अपने को देकर पाया है। जान पड़ता है उन्होंने अपने भीतर कुछ नहीं छोड़ा वद वद दे डाला... शरत् का नाता उनके (पात्रों से) प्रेम का नाता था। प्रेम यानी उत्तरोत्तर अभिन्नता, विज्ञान का नाता नहीं, जिसकी शर्त द्वित्व और पार्थक्य है... जो किन्हीं दो को दूर से पास करता है और पास से इतना पास करना चाहता है कि वे दो एक हो जाये, जो इतना किये बिना चैन लेता नहीं और न चैन देता है। जगत में यदि कुछ ज्ञातव्य है तो वही तत्त्व ज्ञातव्य है वह है प्रेम।"

यही प्रेमतत्व जैनेन्द्र की रचनाओं में मूर्त हुआ है। उनके समान ही कणीश्वर नाथ रेणु भी शरत् के प्रभाव को मुक्त मन से स्वीकार करते हैं। उनके उपन्यास 'मैला आंचल' की ये पंक्तियाँ इस बात की साक्षी हैं— "प्रशान्त चुपचाप ममता को देख रहा है। शरत् बाबू के उपन्यासों की यह नारी अपने विश्वास पर अडिग होकर आज भी आगे बढ़ रही है। रूप बदल दो, नाम बदल दो, समय बदल दो, जगह बदल दो, पर यह कभी बदल नहीं सकती।"

'परती परिकथा' के कई पात्र भी शरत् के पात्रों से भिन्न नहीं हैं। यशपाल भी अपने उपन्यास 'झूठा-सच' में अपने एक पात्र के लिए शरत्चन्द्र के समान साहित्यिक होने की कामना व्यक्त करवाते हैं।

ये सब हिन्दी साहित्य के मूर्धन्य कथाकार हैं। एक और प्रतिष्ठित कथाकार और नाटककार मोहन राकेश ने भावुकता का विश्लेषण इस प्रकार किया है— "भावुकता मन को एक तरल दशा है और एक गर्म दश के लोगों का भावुक होना स्वाभाविक है। इसी में हम महिष्णुता, स्निग्धता और सहानुभूतिपूर्ण दृष्टि मिली है। साथ ही यहाँ कारण हमारी स्नायविक दुर्बलता का है। भिन्न भिन्न प्रदेशों में हमारी भावुकता ने भिन्न भिन्न रूप ले लिए हैं। कहाँ यह भावुकता रुढ़ियों के प्रति विशेष आग्रह के रूप में दिखाई देती है तो कहाँ नवीन के प्रति अन्ध-आस्था के रूप में। हमारी भावुकता हमारे लिए राजनीति का धर्म और धर्म का राजनीति बना देती है। पिछली कई शताब्दियों की आर्थिक परिस्थितियाँ भी हमारी नई स्वभावगत विशेषताओं के लिए उत्तरदायी हैं। इन विशेषताओं से सम्पन्न विशुद्ध भारतीय चरित्र हम शरत् और प्रेमचन्द की रचनाओं में तो मिलते हैं, पर उनके बाद के साहित्य में बहुत कम दिखाई देते हैं। शरत् का 'विप्रदास' और प्रेमचन्द का 'सुरदाम' इसी भूमि की उपज हो सकते हैं और हैं।"

यह है समझने का प्रयत्न। अवमूल्यन करने का नहीं। लेकिन अस्वाकृति और परिहास ये सब भी क्या परोक्ष में शक्ति का स्वीकार ही नहीं है? प्रभाव के प्रसंग में एक और विचारणीय बिन्दु है, जो लेखक शक्तिशाली मन के स्वामी होते हैं, जिनके पास अपनी शैली और अपना जीवनदर्शन होता है वह बहुत शीघ्र प्रारम्भिक प्रभाव से मुक्ति पा लेते हैं। रवीन्द्र के 'घरे बाहरें', शरत् के 'गृहदाह' और जैनेन्द्र का 'सुनीता' इन तीनों में वही त्रिकोण है, परन्तु दर्शन और विवेचन की दृष्टि से तीनों एक दूसरे से भिन्न भूमि पर हैं। जो अपने अधिकार से सशक्त लेखक हैं, वे अपना मौलिकता नहीं खोते। जिनके पास न अपना जीवन बाँध होता है, न अपनी भाषा वे शक्तिशाली लेखक के प्रभाव को अनुकरण के रूप में ग्रहण करते हैं। हिन्दी में ऐसे लेखकों की कमी नहीं रही, पर जिन्होंने उनके जीवन-बोध को समझे बिना और उनके शक्तिशाली मन तक पहुँचे बिना उनका अनुकरण किया, उनका साहित्य क्षणजयी हो सकता है, हुआ भी है।

नियति ने शरत्चन्द्र के लिए जो कार्य निश्चित किया था, वह समाप्त हो गया, पर उनकी ऐतिहासिक अनिवार्यता से इकार नहीं किया जा सकता। उनके साहित्य में हर प्रकार के राजनैतिक सामाजिक अथवा व्यक्तिगत, अन्याय और शोषण के प्रति (सतीत्व और विवाह के अन्याय के प्रति भी) प्रतिरोध का जो स्वर मुखर हुआ है, मातृत्व को उन्होंने जो निर्विघ्नता प्रदान की है, वह कभी अप्रासांगिक नहीं हो सकती। पददलित मानवता का इतना बड़ा प्रेमी, जिन्होंने अपने प्रेम को महत्वाकांक्षा का मूलधन नहीं बनने दिया, उसका साहित्य क्या कभी पुराना पड़ सकता है? वे सच, वे उपदेष्टा नहीं। श्री अरविन्द के शब्दों में, "श्री शरत्चन्द्र की रचनाओं में उनकी विशाल मेधा, मानव और वस्तुओं के सूक्ष्म तथा सही परीक्षण और दुःख तथा पीड़ा के प्रति सहानुभूति से भरे हृदय की अमिट छाप है।"

शरत् ने मानवीय मर्यादा को सर्वोपरि माना। वे जीवन भर हृदय के सवधा की श्रृंखला करते रहे। उन्होंने ऐसे चरित्रों का निर्माण किया, जिनके जितने अनुराग के रंग से रजित थे। यही वह प्रेम है जो मानवीय मर्यादा का सार तत्व है, परन्तु इसका अर्थ यह नहीं कि वे अपने घुग से कटे थे या कल्पना के स्वर्णलोक में विचरण करते थे। यथार्थवादी धारा से जुड़े लेखकों के लिए वे आज भी प्रासांगिक हैं। क्योंकि वे हासो-मुखी समाज के द्वन्द्व के अदभुत चित्रण हैं। उन्होंने बार बार और बेधड़क होकर प्रचलित मूल्यों के आगे प्रश्नचिन्ह लगाये हैं। उनके साहित्य में प्रेम की व्यर्थता का चित्रण का दायित्व सामाजिक परिस्थितियों पर है। उन्होंने समाज को व्यक्ति और परिवार के माध्यम से समझने का प्रयत्न किया है। उनके जन्म-शताब्दी के इस वर्ष में इस तथ्य को फिर से खोजा जा रहा है। औरों के साथ हिन्दी लेखक भी उनका सही मूल्यांकन करने का व्यग्र हैं।

# Hindi literature and Saratchandra

Vishnu Prabhakar

So vast and extensive is the arena of Hindi literature that the extent of Saratchandra's influence over it can be the subject matter of a book only and not that of an article. Though it is a fact that in the initial stages a few translations from English and other languages did appear in Hindi, yet, subsequently it was the translations from Bengali that dominated the scene. Bengali fiction was the richest amongst the Indian languages. Hence they on the whole deeply influenced the Hindi novels. It greatly helped in refining the taste of the Hindi speaking people and writers. It also inspired us to develop new shades of style in fiction writing. ( Vijai Shankar Mall . *Ālōchanā*, Novel Number, October 1954. )

By the time Premchand arrived on the scene, original writing in Hindi had begun. Mostly, the problems were the same as presented by the Bengali novelists. In that age, a large number of social problems was related to the contradictions and various checks in the life and status of a woman. Hindi novel has been quite conversant with them from its earliest time. But with Premchand, these problems gained an extensive, as also intensive, thought-base. His depictions, too, were objective, and, comparatively speaking, more broad-based, rather than romantic ; while Premchand adopted non-malleability, and avoided the sentimentality of Saratchandra's outlook, a section of artists accepted Saratchandra's writings as their ideal and with them it was compassion and mere sentimentalism rather than a matter-of-fact approach that emerged supreme. *Tapōbhūmi*, *Pārakh* and other later novels of Jainendra exhibit this same sentimentality of Saratchandra.

Problems of illicit love and homo-sexuality have not been dealt with by our novelists. But wherever social problems have been raised, we do not come across that form of paralysing and self-inflicting anguish that has been the subject matter of Saratchandra's works like *Dēbdās* and *Gṛhadāha*. Hindi rests on a slightly harder base and the voice of challenge is more prominent and powerful in it. ( Dr. Ramratan Bhatnagar—Ibid. )

Premchand himself had told Jainendra : "I am not a Bengali. They are sentimental. I can never reach that height in sentimentality they are capable of. I am not that gifted. One can never reach through knowledge where it is possible to reach through heart alone. But,

Jainendra, I think that hardness, too, is required.....Both Rabindranath and Saratchandra are great, but is that the road for Hindi, too? I think not. Hindi is the National Language. At least, that is not the road for me".

The new writers seriously condemned Saratchandra's 'flood of tears'. But does Premchand's *Nirmalā* draw tears any the whit less? Are the sketches of pain and anguish of a woman's heart, as painted by Saratchandra, not present in *Nirmalā* as well?

The older generation of Hindi litterati tried to understand Saratchandra very honestly. Shantipriya Dwivedi, Ram Swarup Chaturvedi, Ilachandra Joshi, Jainendra Kumar, Dr. Indar Nath Madan, and Manmatha Nath Gupta are some of the well-known names who have freely praised Saratchandra's psychological approach, natural but wide outlook of life, deep instinctive feelings and fathomless human compassion. Dr. Madan holds that "the flame of his love and compassion shines steadily as the love-light in the darkness enveloping the middle class society". Jainendra says: "Society is formed of human relations. Saratchandra injected the warmth and liquidity of sentiment in those relations. He judged and taught others to judge persons living\*outside the social orbit from a humane angle. If the expanse of Saratchandra is narrow, its density amply makes up for that. If the objectivity be not that deep, the melody is distinctive. It is difficult to distinguish as to which among his works is Saratchandra's favourite, or as to who amongst his characters is the hero, who the side hero, and who the villain. It seems that all of them are he himself."

The number of translations of his works may be cited as proof of his popularity. It is said that since 1919, seventeen publishers brought out seventeen translations of Saratchandra's works. The extensive sale they must have enjoyed can well be imagined. In recent times many dissertations have been written comparing him with Premchand and Jainendra. Only one has been published as yet (Prēmchāḍ āur Śarad Kē Upanvās--Surendra Nath Tiwari). Dr. Jagannath Ojha has undertaken a deep study of the form and extent of his influence upon the Hindi novelists. The famous 'Chhayavadi' critic of Hindi, Dr. Nagendra, accepts that: "In the field of prose, the influence of Rabindranath was much limited.....Later on, when the finer feelings of heart revolted against the reason backed utilitarian attitude, even then the Indian novel absorbed more of the liquidity of the self-suffering art of Saratchandra... In this fashion, the extent of debt owed by Indian Novel to Gandhi, Marx and Freud in the sphere of thought, and to Premchand, Tolstoy, Saratchandra, Lawrence, etc., in the realm of art, is far more than to Rabindranath." (Anusandhān Wa Ālōchanā—Nagendra.)

The extent to which this so-called 'self suffering art' of Saratchandra influenced Jainendra has been extensively dealt with by Nalini Vilchan Sharma. "In Jainendra, Hindi has actually found the substitute for Saratchandra. Avid readers of Hindi speaking area were victims of immaturity, frustration, and sentimentality owing to the political and economic situation as also owing to the cultural and intellectual blending of age. Premchand had expressed his reluctance to accept the feministic traits of Saratchandra. A few 'Chhayavadis', and particularly the minor 'Chhayavadis' had introduced Saratchandra's 'tear-saturated sentimentality through their poetry. But it had proved insufficient. In comparsion with their inexplicable anguish, the sentimentality of Jainendra's characters, ever greedy for the pleasure of 'self-torture', proved highly popular. Still, it is worth mentioning that even Jainendra's popularity was insignificant compared to the number in which the translated works of Saratchandra, the master artist of the particular craft, were sold.

Had Jainendra written only *Pārakh* or *Tyāgpatra*, and if he had not written *Sunītā*, he would have remained a mere shadow of Saratchandra. But, just as Premchand had been able



to rise much above the better-than-average-generality of his other novels after writing *Gōdān*, similarly, as the author of *Sunītā*, Jainendra deserves a much higher rating than that of being a shadow of Saratchandra. (Ālōchanā, Novel Number, October 1954)

The feelings exhibited by both the above scholars are rather derogatory. A few other later critics have discussed Saratchandra in a still more derogatory way. If some labelled him "the artist of the frustration of romantic dreams of the people blindly tied to the unchangeable Law of Fate and of the glory of tears", others called him "the creator of impotent and rootless male characters". He was also accused of '*Dada-Didi*'-ism.

Sex is irrelevant to the type of love that has been portrayed in the literature of Saratchandra. This jars with the modern writer. He blurts out without any reference to the context. "Why this fear of sex?" There is no denying the fact that many writers have been influenced only by the self-torturing aspect of his art. Tears and self-inflicting agony have been more capturing than his deep-lying sensibility, fine shades of sympathy, excellent and touching artistry, and the realistic social attitude based upon human dignity. Even if we forego discussing his contemporary Hindi writers, two examples will suffice to establish how his *Dēbdās* has influenced younger writers. There is a novel *Pārō* by a serious modern writer, Shri Siddhesh. Describing its process of creation, he says: "I was about 21 when I wrote *Pārō*. That is, it was completed during the highly immature and sentimental state of my mind. I was weaving its plot, passing my unemployed days immediately after my graduation, in a small township of Shahabad District. The railway station was nearby and the market place only at a small distance. The rest of the area was as described for the village.....The biggest centre of attraction there was a river. Often have I dived deep within myself for a few moments on its bank which had long stretches of land covered with sand and solitude. There was an old Shiva Temple and a banyan tree at hand. The entire atmosphere of the place would remind me of *Dēbdās*, the hero of Saratchandra's novel. But, contemplating about *Pārō* (*Pārbati*) I felt as if she was lying buried somewhere near about. She had not left anything to be told about her. During his life time, *Dēbdās* had said quite a lot about himself and he passed away leaving *Pārō* alive. But what happened to *Pārō* thereafter? In the dusky shadows, one evening, I felt her wail entering the recesses of my heart, and, enveloped in this mad thought, I, too, did shed copious tears internally that evening. The night also could bring no solace. Next day, I began writing *Pārō*.

Prior to it, I had read very little of Saratchandra. If there was any image of Saratchandra before me, it was entirely based upon his *Dēbdās*. Had I read other novels of his, may be my '*Pārō*' would have never been written. Because, the language, the subject matter, and the portrayal of the female characters—all are much akin to this novel *Dēbdās*....."

There is a story *Pārō-Pūrvāiyā* by Sm. Dipti Khandelwal, another well-known writer engaged fervently in search for values. Its title is symbolic in itself. Sudhā, the heroine of this story, who is lovingly called '*Pūrvāiyā*', 'the easterly breeze', by her friend, and who was always jilted in love, says:

"Didi, but Viju, too, has jilted me. Ever since I have come here, he, too, has been snatched away from me. When I write to him letters galore, hardly do I receive any reply..... and then I feel as if I am again losing consciousness.....and again beginning to drown...If Viju is lost, I, too, will be lost".

"Sudhā, *Pūrvāiyā*....." I was caressing her face with trembling hands.

"Not *Pūrvāiyā*, Didi, *Pārō*'...No one could be my *Dēbdās*, but I have been reduced to become *Pārō*", Sudhā's sobs became faster (*Kave Sach* -- Dipti Khandelwal; page 51.)

Both these extracts are highly sentimental. Saratchandra himself has condemned the self-inflecting sentimentality of Dēbdās. But the fact is that there is not sentimentality alone in Dēbdās. Jainendra has written : "If Dēbdās could accept the separation from his beloved still more completely, it would have been almost impossible to find another Yogi-like character like him in the entire field of novel. Should we delude our eyes merely because he did not reach that height ? To the extent he accepted the parting, and he did it to a major extent, this parting was a bliss for him and Dēbdās rose higher. Dēbdās kept the flame of Pārbati burning bright but when the married Pārbati offered her total surrender to him in the solitude of night, how did Dēbdās, surrounded by the atmosphere of utter depravity, react ? Did he accept Pārbati ? No, he did not. He kept her, like an idol, at a distance from himself. (*Āwāra Masihā*, 2nd Edition, page 182.) He did aspire to be the devotee of the idol, but never craved for the possession of the idol."

Besides, there is one more meaning of Saratchandra's literature. There is love in it — deep and unfathomable. But the love to which Society does not accord its sanction remains unfulfilled even in his literature. Love can not be transplanted on Society. It has to stem from the depth of Society. If it does not, Society is to be blamed, the rules and regulations of Society are to be blamed, not the writer, nor even the character. Time and again, Saratchandra has painted this very despotism of the Hindu Society through the pain and anguish of his characters. But most of the writers and critics exhausted themselves by terming it as 'suicidal sentimentality.' Very few tried to peep inside Saratchandra's heart.

The famous Punjabi novelist, Nanak Singh, has confessed that although he was not influenced by Saratchandra's characters or art, he used to get his inspiration from there only.

Similarly, many post-Premchand creative writers were influenced by Saratchandra in one way or the other. Prominent among them are Chatur Sen Shastri, Vishambhar Nath Sharma Kaushik, Bhagwati Prasad Vajpeyi, Ilachandra Joshi, Jainendra Kumar, Agyeya, Dwijendra Nath Mishra, Nirgun, Kamalakant Verma, Phanishwar Nath Renu, Satyendra Sharat, Yogesh, Dipti Khandelwal, Siddhesh, Narasi Mehta, and the author himself. The earlier creations of Yashpal — *Dēśdrōhi* and *Dādā Comrade* — are not outside this sphere. Siddhesh goes to the extent of maintaining that : "Even afterwards, Rajkamal Chowdhury, the painter of women's consciousness, in the modern context, if not as the conductor of Saratchandra's zeal, has, at least, carried his pangs of the fragmentation of her personality".

In this way, innumerable would be the modern writers' indebtedness to Saratchandra. Another critic, Dr. Bechan, goes to the extent of saying : "The compassion of Saratchandra's characters and novels pervades the Hindi fiction even to this day. Writers of the calibre of Yashpal and Amrit Rai too could not go beyond Saratchandra and Rabindranath in the survey of man." In the opinion of Shri Upendra Nath Ashk, even in the writings of a vehement critic of Saratchandra like Rajendra Yadav, the '*Dada-Didi*'-ism of Saratchandra can be clearly discerned overtly or covertly. But what, after all, this influence is ? How, and in what form, do we absorb it ? Are the similarity of atmosphere and the similarity of mental makeup the only reasons which attract us towards someone ? Does the newness not influence us ? Does not someone's uselessness and frustration shown us the way towards meaningfulness and faith ?

Even those scholars who deem the influence of Saratchandra negligible, at least agree that : "By dealing with the social life or problems related to women, Saratchandra has certainly created a mentality with which the post-Premchand novelists like Jainendra, Agyeya, or say, Ilachandra Joshi, kept on developing their characters. But I cannot detect any direct or living influence of Saratchandra. But one can say this much that the man-woman relationship in *Tyāgpatra*, *Sēkhar* and *Sanyāsī*

appears incomplete without Saratchandra's background". (From Dr. Ram Swarup Chaturvedi's letter to the author.)

Whether 'negligible' or 'very much' important—it is at least 'as much' important. However much may we have advanced, Saratchandra has influenced Hindi writing, or has, at least, inspired it from both the positive and negative points of view. But the statement of Dr. Ram Swarup Chaturvedi that we have absorbed his influence emotionally much more than consciously is absolutely correct. We have never tried to understand that Saratchandra exhibits a wonderful restraint in voicing the condensed feelings and in painting love. Śrikānta is not an impotent person, nor without roots. He is the symbol of the mental experiences of one who is gasping and choking between the call of his inner conscience and the traditions in the age of social struggle ; of one, who hangs in between the old and the changing forces in the transitional period of the ancient and the modern social systems. (Dr. Indar Nath Madan.) Saratchandra himself points, time and again, towards the dilemma of the uncontrollable heart of Rājīlakṣmī and her conscious religious bent.

However, it would be wrong to believe that no effort whatsoever has been made to understand Saratchandra. Jainendra has said very candidly that "Saratchandra has discovered himself through giving himself away. It appears that nothing was left in him. Every drop of his being was poured out. He bore only love's relation with his characters—love that leads you to oneness—not the relation of science, which is based on dualism and separate identities but the relation which brings two persons nearer to each other and then aims at getting them so much close together that the two may become one, and which never rests, nor allows others to rest till this state is achieved. If there be any element worthy of knowledge, it is that of Love".

This very element of love has been personified in Jainendra's writings. Like him, Phanishwar Nath Renu also freely acknowledges Saratchandra's influence. The following quotation from his novel *Mailā Āchal* bear witness to this fact : "Praśānta is silently gazing at Mamatā. This lady of Saratchandra's novels keeps on marching ahead even today, firm in her faith. You may change her form, her name, her time, her place, but she would never change".

Many of the characters of his *Paratī Parikathā* are no different from Saratchandra's. Yashpal, too, makes one of his characters in his novel *Jhūṭhā Sach* express his longing of becoming a litterateur like Saratchandra.

All these are the top writers of Hindi literature. One other reputed novelist and dramatist, Mohan Rakesh, analyses sentimentality saying : "Sentimentality is a liquid state of mind and it is quite natural for the people living in warm tropical countries to be sentimental. We have acquired tolerance, softness, and a sympathetic attitude through this alone. At the same time, it is also the cause of our nervous weakness. Our sentimentality has assumed different forms in different regions. In some it appears as an extraordinary insistence upon traditionality ; in others, as a blind faith in all that is new. Our sentimentality alone turns politics into religion, and religion into politics for us. Economic conditions during the last few centuries, too, are responsible for many of our newly acquired characteristics. Pure Indian characters, possessing these characteristics, are, of course, found in Saratchandra and Premchand, but are very rarely to be seen in later literature. *Bipradās* of Saratchandra and *Surdās* of Premchand may be, and are, the products of the soil".

This is an attempt to understand. Not to evaluate. But are not rejection and derision the indirect recognition of the force itself ? In the context of influence, there is still one more point worth considering. Writers, who possess a strong mind and who have their own style and philosophy of life, manage to get rid of the early influences very fast. The same triangle exists in Rabindranath's *Gharē Bāirē*, Saratchandra's *Grhadāha* and Jainendra's *Sunītā*. But, from the

point of view of philosophy and treatment, they are on different planes altogether from each other. Those who are powerful writers in their own rights do not lose their originality. Those who possess neither a philosophy of life, nor a language of their own, accept the influence of powerful writers in the form of imitation. There has never been any dearth of such writers in Hindi. But those who imitate without understanding their philosophy and without reaching the depths of their powerful mind produce works that may turn out to be ephemeral ; these have, in fact, turned out to be so. The task allotted by fate to Saratchandra is now complete. But his historic inevitability cannot be denied. The note of protest expressed so lucidly in his writings against every type of political, social, and individual injustice and exploitation ( even against the injustice related to the chastity of women and the institution of marriage ), and the impersonality imparted by him to motherhood, can never become irrelevant. Can the literature produced by such a great lover of the down-trodden humanity, who never allowed this love to become the capital of his own ambition, ever grow stale ? He was a creator and not merely one who mouthed pious platitudes. In the words of Shri Aurobindo : "What is stamped on Saratchandra's work everywhere, is a large intelligence, an acute and accurate observation of men and things and a heart full of sympathy for sorrow and suffering".

Saratchandra considered human dignity supreme. Throughout his life he continued his search for relations of heart. He created characters whose hearts were fully saturated with love and affection. This is the love that represents the assence of human dignity. But it certainly does not mean that he was cut off from his time, or that he used to meander through the golden land of imagination. He is relevant, even today, for the writer of the realistic school, since, he is an incomparable painter of the dilectics of the decay-oriented society. Repeatedly and fearlessly, has he questioned the current values. The depiction of the nonfruitfulness of love in his writings is only the reflection of the then prevailing social circumstances. He has tried to understand Society through the medium of the individual and the family. This fact is once again being sought and emphasised during this year of his centenary. Along with others, Hindi literature, too, is equally eager for a correct and proper evaluation of him.

*Translated by Manmohan Thakore*



# शरत्-रवीन्द्र प्रसंग

हमकुमार तिवारी

इसमें शक नहीं कि रवीन्द्र की प्रतिभा बहुमुखी और दिगंतप्रसारी थी। इन्होंने साहित्य की जिस विधा को छुआ, सोना कर दिया, पर यह भी सत्य है कि वह उतनी सर्वत्रगामी नहीं हुई, जितनी शरत् की कथा-प्रतिभा। गो कि शरत् की बड़ी कटु आलोचनाएं हुईं, बड़ी निंदा हुई, फिर भी पाठकों के वह बेहद प्रिय हुए, आज भी हैं। इसका एक ही कारण है कि समाज के पतित, पीड़ित अभावग्रस्त के प्रति उन्हें अपार वेदना और असौम्य सहानुभूति थी। इस मर्मवेदना और सीमाहीन सहानुभूति ने इनकी भाषा को मर्मस्पर्शिता का वह जादू दिया कि प्रत्येक पाठक के अंतर्मूल तक उनकी पैठ हुई, हर के प्यार को उसने खींचा और प्रत्येक की वेदना को अभ्युत्थान किया। वह भाषा मर्म की, दर्दी की भाषा हो गई। ऋषि अरविन्द के शब्दों में—“शरत् की सभी रचनाओं में एक उदार दृष्टि, गहरी निरीक्षा और मनुष्य के चिरतापविलसित दर्दी हृदय का परिचय मिलता है।”

रवीन्द्र की लोकोत्तर प्रतिभा से बंगाल हत-चकित हुआ और बंगाली-हृदय यह स्वीकारने को मजबूर हुआ कि

गगन नहिले तोमार धरितो केवा

(आसमान न रहा होता, तो तुम्हें धारण कौन करता ?) पर निरे मामूली से शरत् गोया बंगालियों के मन के मीत हो। सबके माथ बैठते-उठते उन की मनोवेदना का हिस्सा बटा रहे हो, उनकी रुंधी भावना-कामना को वाणी दे रहे हो। उन्होंने आसमान की ऊंचाई से कल्पना की आँखों अपने देश और देश की जनता का नहीं देखा, किसी पूर्व निर्धारित आदर्श के बटखरे से आदमी को नहीं तोला, बल्कि लोगों के हजार दुःख, अकल्पनीय पीड़ा, बेबसों की धुन और जग की पवित्रता में पैठ कर प्यार भरे हृदय और सहानुभूति से गोली हुई आँखों अपने साहित्य की सामग्री चुनी बीनी। यह अवश्य है कि शरत्चन्द्र ने उठाई समस्याओं का समाधान नहीं दिया, जंगल का उत्तर नहीं दिया, शरत् ने स्वयं स्वीकारा है—“मैंने अपनी रचनाओं में कोई समाधान नहीं दिया है, सिर्फ भूल दिखाई है।... आशा करता हूँ, नए लेखक दर्द की इन जगहों को और निखारकर प्रस्तुत करेंगे, उनके वास्तविक समाधान की दिशा देगे।” पर उन्होंने समाज के उन कलक-चिन्हों पर सारी शक्ति लगाकर लेखनी चलाई, जो दुष्ट प्रथा के गहरे अलम से बने, जिनका जहर समाज की एड़ी-चोटी, अस्थि-मज्जा में फैला था। सामाजिक रीति-नीति की कठोर प्रतिकूलता के आधि-त्याधि से जर्जर, दुःख-दरिद्रों से दीन जिन्दगी के घुसाफूरत को दुस्सह और निरर्थक कर दिया था, व्यक्ति स्वाधीनता तथा पारिपाश्विक सुख-चैन को नागपाश से जकड़ रक्खा था—इसमें जूझते हुए जीवन के होठों के गूंगे बोल, सूखे आँसू को बेताब तड़पती विवश-वेदना पर उनकी अभिव्यक्ति, सहज किन्तु सशक्त अभिव्यक्ति ने उन्हें लोगों के अंतर्मम तक पहुँचा दिया। और इस तरह गणप्रेमिक शरत्चन्द्र का स्थान जन-गण में हो गया। रवीन्द्र ने स्वयं उनके लिए लिखा—“अपनी प्रतिभा से तुमने देश के हृदय को जीता है। देश के अंतर की गहराई में तुम्हारा प्रवेशाधिकार है। तुम्हारी लेखनी ने बंगालियों के चित्त-तनु को हँसी और आसू के नवतर तथा गम्भीरतर व्यंजना से अभिव्यक्त किया है। उनके मनोमंदिर में जहाँ चिरंतन की पुण्यवेदिका है, बंगला साहित्य की ज्योतिषिखा में वहाँ तुम्हारे जीवन का श्रेष्ठ अर्ध-प्रदीप लबी आया देने की प्रतिष्ठित रहेगा।”

शरत् का ख्याल भी उनके लिए बहुत ही ऊँचा था। चंदननगर में 'प्रवर्तक संघ' द्वारा आयोजित एक सभा में उन्होंने कहा था— "रवीन्द्रनाथ जैसी इतनी बड़ी प्रतिभा संसार में पैदा होगी कि नहीं, संदेह है।" सन् १९३३ में हुगली जिला साहित्य सम्मेलन के अवसर पर उन्होंने कानन बिहारी मुखोपाध्याय से कहा था— "मैं बार-बार सबसे कहता हूँ, मैंने उनसे बहुत पाया है। अपने देशमें उनके साहित्य की तुलना नहीं। उनके आगे हम कुछ भी नहीं हैं। जवाब हो कर सोचता हूँ, इतनी बड़ी प्रतिभा इस देश में पैदा कैसे हुई?"

रवीन्द्रनाथ की रचनाओं से वह मुग्ध थे। 'जाँख की किरकिरी' की भाषा और प्रकाश-भंगिमा से वह ऐसे अभिभूत हुए कि आजीवन नहीं भूले। उन्होंने इसके पहले गोया यह कभी सोचा ही नहीं था कि कोई बात इस खूबी से भी कही जा सकती है, दूसरे की कल्पना की छवि में पाठक अपने हृदय को ऐसी आँखों देख सकता है। कविवर्य कालिदास राय को उन्होंने कहा था— "मैंने 'जाँख की किरकिरी' को चौबीस बार और 'नष्टनीड़' को बीस बार पढ़ा है। और इन्हीं दो किताबों से मुझे साहित्य की दीक्षा मिली है।" 'जाँख की किरकिरी' ने बंगला-साहित्य में उपन्यास की धारा को नया मोड़ दिया। 'दुर्गेश नंदिनी' के बाद उपन्यास के क्षेत्र में यदि कोई पुस्तक नया युग-प्रवर्तन का दावा कर सकती है, तो निस्संदेह वह पुस्तक 'जाँख की किरकिरी' है। और रवीन्द्रनाथ ने इस उपन्यास में संस्कार-मुक्ति की जिस प्रवेष्टा का आभास दिया है, उसी का पूर्णतर विकास शरत्-साहित्य में है। इसीलिए शरत् उन्हें अपना गुरु भी मानते रहे थे।

रवीन्द्रनाथ के साहित्य पर वास्तव में उन्हें ऐसी आस्था और आदर था। सन् १९१३ ई० में उन्होंने उपेन्द्रनाथ गंगापाध्याय को एक पत्र में लिखा था— "वर्तमान में एक रविबाबू के सिवाय मुझ-सा अच्छा समझदार दूसरा कोई नहीं। यह न समझो कि गर्व कर रहा हूँ, पर इसे मेरी आत्मनिर्भरता ही कहो या प्राज्ञ ही कहो, यहाँ मेरी धारणा है।" रवीन्द्र की कथा-प्रतिभा की श्रेष्ठता उन्हाने तहेदिल से स्वीकार कर ली थी, कई प्रसंगों में यह बात स्पष्ट हो गई थी। दिलीपकुमार राय को एक पत्र में उन्होंने लिखा था— "बुद्धदेव बसु ने अगर यह कहा है कि रवीन्द्रनाथ मुझसे कहीं बड़े औपन्यासिक हैं, तो यह तो उसने सच ही कहा है मंदू, मेरा मन तो जानता है यह सत्य है, परम सत्य है।" रंगून से प्रमथनाथ भट्टाचार्य को लिखा था— "प्रमथ, एक अहंकार करूँ मैं? कहो तो करूँ। जिस दिन तनमन से यह महसूस करो कि मुझ से अच्छा उपन्यास या कहानी एक रविबाबू के सिवाय और कोई नहीं लिख सकता, उसी दिन मुझसे लेख, कहानी या उपन्यास लिखने का अनुरोध करना, उससे पहले नहीं। वह तो यहाँ तक कहते थे, कोशिश करके भी मैं ऐसा (रवीन्द्रनाथ जैसा) नहीं लिख सकता।"

उपन्यास के ही नहीं, शरत् बाबू रवीन्द्रनाथ की कविता के भी वैसे ही प्रशंसक थे, उतने ही रुचिशील पाठक थे। रवीन्द्रनाथ के शब्द-सौष्ठव पर वे फिदा थे। कुछ पंक्तियाँ तो मौके पर उनकी जवान पर आ जाती थीं। जैसे—

जे फूल ना, फुटिते

झोरिलो धरणीते

जे नदी मरुपथे

हारालो धारा

जानि गो जानि ता हयनी हारा...

बामार है और रविबाबू की पंक्तियाँ याद आ गईं :

नानान छापेर जमलो शिशि

नानान मापेर कौतो होलो जङ्गो

व्याधिर बेये आधि हेलो बङ्गो

ठाकतारेरा बोललो तखन,

हावा बदल करो।

‘बलाका’ की तो लगभग सभी कविताएँ उन्हें कंठ थी। अस्वस्थ होने पर एक-एक करके मुखस्थ पढ़ते जाते।

इतने ही हैरान थे वह रवीन्द्रनाथ का रूप देखकर। राबर्ट लिंड ने जैसे कहा था— “Rabindranath Tagore is assuredly the most beautiful man I have seen in my life.” वैसे ही वह भी थे—“मानो गंधर्व लोक का राजकुमार भटक कर बंगाल की जलो माटी में जा निकला है।” छिहत्तर साल की उम्र में उन्हें देखकर अविनाशचन्द्र घोषाल से कहा था—“इतने तो बूढ़े हो गए, मगर क्या रूप है। आँखें हटाने को जी नहीं चाहता।”

रवीन्द्रनाथ के प्रति उनकी श्रद्धाभक्ति के सबूत ऐसे अनेक मौकों पर मिले। सांप्रदायिक बंटवारे के विरोध में सन् १९३६ ई० में कलकत्ते के टाउन हाल में एक विराट सभा हुई थी। सभापति के अपने भाषण में शरत्चन्द्र ने कहा था—“रवीन्द्रनाथ के इस विराट नाम के आगे-पीछे परिचय का कौन-सा विशेषण जोड़ा जा सकता है? विश्वकवि, कविसार्वभौम आदि बहुत कुछ लोग पहले ही जोड़ चुके हैं। पर हमलोग, जो उनके शिष्य-सेवक हैं, आपस में महज कवि कह कर ही उनका जिक्र करते हैं। बाहर कहते हैं रवीन्द्रनाथ। जानते हैं कि इस सभ्य संसार के एक छोर से दूसरे छोर तक इस व्यक्ति को समझाने में किसी को भी असुविधा नहीं होगी।”

रेडियो पर शरत्चन्द्र के जन्म-दिवस पर शरत्-शर्वरी का अनुष्ठान किया जाता था। बासठवें जन्म दिवस यानी अपने अंतिम जन्मोत्सव के अभिनन्दन का उत्तर देते हुए उन्होंने कहा था— “बासठ साल की आयु की दहलीज पर कदम रखते हुए सबसे आशीर्वाद मांगने के पहले मैं गुरुदेव विश्वकवि रवीन्द्रनाथ को, जो आज रोग-शय्या पर हैं, प्रणाम करता हूँ। संसार में साहित्य-साधना में उनका आशीर्वाद, वह सिर्फ मेरा नहीं, प्रत्येक साहित्यिक का परम संपद है। आज के दिन उनका वह आशीर्वाद मैं मांग लेता हूँ।” यही नहीं, स्काटिश चर्च कालेज में अपने जन्मदिन के अभिनन्दन में बोलते हुए शरत् बाबू प्रसंगवश बोल गए—“देशवासियों से मेरा अनुरोध है, रवीन्द्रनाथ के तिरोधान पर देशमें कई दिनों तक राष्ट्रीय शोक-दिवस मनाया जाय।”

सन् १९१६ ई० में शरत्चन्द्र रंगून से कलकत्ता आए गए। जहाँ तक पता चलता है, सन् १९१७ में रवीन्द्रनाथ से उनका परिचय हुआ और यह परिचय जोड़ासाको की ‘विचित्रा बैठक’ में रवीन्द्रनाथ के बालबंधु चारु वदोपाध्याय ने कराया था। ‘शनिवारेर चिठि’ में नलिनीकांत भट्टशाली के एक लेख से यह भी पता चलता है कि सन् १९१८ ई० के मार्च में जब रवीन्द्रनाथ ने ‘विचित्रा’ में अपना निबंध पढ़ा था, तो शरत्चन्द्र उपस्थित थे। उस दिन शरत्चन्द्र से अगली बैठक में कहानी पढ़ने का आग्रह भी किया गया था। और, शरत्चन्द्र ने ‘विचित्रा’ में अपनी ‘विलासी’ कहानी पढ़ी थी। रवीन्द्रनाथ भी शरत्चन्द्र के कलकत्ते के मकान पर एकबार गए थे और वहाँ उन्होंने ‘बलाका’ से अपनी ‘छवि’ कविता का पाठ किया था।

जो भी हो, जान-पहचान, परिचय की गहराई पत्राचार और रचना से जितनी भी हुई हो, यों वे दोनों उतने घनिष्ठ नहीं हो पाए थे। यह रवीन्द्रनाथ के ही एक पत्र से मालूम होता है। शरत्चन्द्र को मृत्यु के बाद—‘भारतवर्ष’ के विशेषांक के लिए प्रबोधचन्द्र सन्याल ने रविबाबू से कुछ लिखने का आग्रह किया था। उस आग्रह पर जो चिट्ठी उन्होंने लिखी थी, उसमें लिखा था—“बात नहीं, चीत नहीं, शरत् हठात् बंगला साहित्य-मंडली में आ धमके। अपरिचय से परिचय में पहुंचने में देर नहीं हुई। ... उस समय कर्म के खिचाव और आयु के भेद से मैं दूर रह गया। कलकत्ता छोड़ा। ... इसी समय शरत् का अभ्युदय हुआ। शरत् से बहुत बहुत निकट से मिलने-जुलने का सुयोग नहीं हुआ। ... इसीसे मेरी यह क्षति हो गई। फिर भी उनसे भेट मुलाकात या बातचीत नहीं हुई, ऐसी बात नहीं। मगर परिचय नहीं हो सका। सिर्फ देखना-सुनना नहीं, चीन्ह-पहचान होती तो अच्छा था।”

रवीन्द्रनाथ को शरत् के लिए लेकिन स्नेह था, उनकी प्रातिभा, उनकी रचना की पहचान थी। नारी-हृदय के इस जादूगर पर इसलिए उन्होंने एक कविता भी लिखी थी।—सन् : ३२ ई० में ‘पुनर्ध’ लिखते हुए शांतिनिकेतन में उन्होंने एक कविता लिखी—साधारण मेरे (साधारण लड़की)। कविता मशहूर है। कुछ पंक्तियाँ—



जामि जतःपुरेर मेये  
 चिनबे ना जामाके  
 तोमार शेष गल्पेर बोइटी पोडेछि, शरत् बाबू,  
 'बासि फुलेर माला'  
 तोमार नायिका एलोकेशीर मरणदशा धारेछिलो  
 पचत्रिंश बछर वयसे ।  
 पंचिश बछर वयसेर संगे छिलो तार रेपारेषि  
 जितिऐ दिले ताके ।  
 पाए पोड़ि तोमार, एकटागल्प लेखो तुमि शरत् बाबू  
 नितान्त साधारण मेयेर गल्प—  
 ये दुर्भागिनी के दूरेर थेके पाह्ला दिते हय  
 जतत पांचसात जन असामान्यार संगे—  
 अर्थात् सप्तरथिनीर मार ।  
 बुझे नियेछि जामार कपाल भंगेछे  
 हार होयेछे जामार ।  
 किन्तु, तुमि जार कथा लिखबे  
 ताके जितिये दियो जामार होये—  
 पोड़ते-पोड़ते बुक जेनो उठे फुले  
 फूलचंदन पड़क तोमार कलमेर मुखे ।

श्री दिलीप कुमार राय ने उनकी 'निष्कृति' का अंगरेजी में अनुवाद किया था—अनुवादक के आग्रह पर रविबाबू ने उसकी भूमिका लिखी थी—अनुवाद को श्री अरविन्द भी देख गए थे । भूमिका में उन्होंने जो लिखा, वह शरत् की कलम के प्रति उनकी आस्था और गहरे स्नेह का ही परिचय है । यहाँ नहीं, उनके सत्तावनवें जन्म-दिवस पर रविबाबू ने अपनी नाटिका 'काल-की यात्रा' उन्हें समर्पित की थी । उत्सर्ग की पक्तियों के बाद अभिनदन में लिखा था—“तुम्हारे जन्मदिन के उपलक्ष में 'काल की यात्रा' नाम की नाटिका मैंने तुम्हें समर्पित की है । आशा है, मेरा यह दान तुम्हारे अयोग्य नहीं होगा । ...काल की यात्रा की बाधा को रोकने का महामन्त्र तुम्हारी लेखनी की नाक पर सार्थक हो, इस आशीर्वाद के साथ तुम्हारे दीर्घ जीवन की कामना करता हूँ ।” गुरु-शिष्य जैसा यह संबंध दोनों का बड़ा मीठा था, फिर भी कारणवश ऐसा बेसुरा भी बजा, जिससे मन ही मन उनमें कटुता पैदा हुई, बढ़ती गई और कभी-कभी मनसे जवान पर, भावना से लेखनी पर भी उतर गई । बंगला साहित्य के इन दो दिग्गजों के जीवन-इतिहास के कुछ ऐसे भी अध्याय हैं, और वह भी सहज मामूली मतभेदों और गलत फहमियों से । जैसे, रविबाबू जब विदेश-भ्रमण से लौटे, तो उन्होंने सत्याग्रह और चरखा पर आस्था नहीं व्यक्त की । शरत् को स्वयं चरखे पर विश्वास नहीं था, पर वह सक्रिय कांग्रेस कर्मी थे । गांधीजी जब कलकत्ता पहुँचे थे, तो देशबन्धु नितरंजन दास के यहाँ ठहरे थे । वहाँ गांधीजी से चरखे पर उनकी बात हुई थी और उन्होंने कहा था मैं इसे आपके प्रति भक्ति के नाते चलाता हूँ, पर स्वराज्य तो हथियारों से मिलेगा । फिर भी रविबाबू से वह झूझ हुए । निंदा-श्लोकायत की । किन्तु पछतावा भी हुआ । और स्वयं रवीन्द्रनाथ को उन्होंने एक पत्र में लिखा—“आपके आगे मैंने बड़ा अपराध किया है । मैं लोगों से यह जरूर कहा है कि विलायत से लौट कर आप बहुत बदल गए हैं । बंगाल के लोगों पर आपको पहले जैसी स्नेह-ममता नहीं रही । चरखा और असहयोग पर आपको कोई आस्था या विश्वास नहीं है । ...आपके वह नए शिष्यों में मैं भी एक हूँ । उनकी तरह मैंने भी आज तक आपकी निंदा नहीं की है । इस बार क्यों मुझे ऐसी दुर्बुद्धि हुई ।”

एक लेख में कविगुरु ने उपन्यासों के संबंध में—‘साहित्य की मात्रा’—कुछ लिखा। शरत्चन्द्र उस पर खीजे। पता चलने पर कविगुरु ने शरत् को पत्र लिखा— “शरत्, किसी पत्रिका में देखा, तुम्हारा खयाल है, उपन्यास के बारे में मैंने जो लिखा है, उनमें तुम्हारी रचना की ओर भी मेरा संकेत है। मुझे लगता है, तुम्हें उत्तेजित करने के लिए ही किसी ने ऐसा इशारा किया होगा। तुमसे और दिलीप से मेरा मतभेद मेरी निर्बाधता हो सकता है, पर वह मेरा कसूर नहीं। पर, मेरी किसी रचना का उद्देश्य तुम पर आक्रमण करना हो, तो मैं उसे अपराध ही मानूंगा। मैंने ऐसा नहीं किया है, यह यकीन करो।”

इसी के संबंध में उन्होंने दिलीप कुमार राय को भी पत्र लिखा था—“किसी पत्र लेखक ने अभी-अभी मुझे बताया है कि शरत् का खयाल है, मैं उन पर नाराज हूँ। जो मुझे अच्छी तरह जानते हैं, वे ऐसी गलती हरगिज नहीं कर सकते। शरत् ने मेरे प्रति कोई अपराध नहीं किया है। शायद तुम जानते हो, शरत् के प्रति मैंने कभी अश्रद्धा नहीं दिखाई है। शुरू से ही मैं उनकी प्रशंसा करता आ रहा हूँ।”

‘पथ के दावेदार’ पुस्तक जन्त हो गई थी। शरत् बाबू ने रविबाबू को पत्र लिखा था कि उनके जैसे व्यक्तित्व के व्यक्ति को इस संबंध में कुछ लिखना बोलना चाहिए। रविबाबू ने लेकिन वैसा कुछ नहीं किया और जो पत्र जवाब में लिखा, वह शरत् को नहीं रुचा। रुष्ट होकर उन्होंने कुछ मित्रों को उस समय जो पत्र लिखा था, उनमें शरत् के मानसिक कष्ट और क्षोभ का स्पष्ट पता चलता है। पर ये बातें साहित्य के लिए इतने महत्व की नहीं, महत्व की बात है कि मतभेद, वैमनस्य के बावजूद दोनों में एक दूसरे के लिए काफी स्नेह-सदभावना थी। ऐसे हर मौके पर जब एक को दूसरे के प्रति कटु होना पड़ा, तो उन्हें हृदय में उसका पछतावा हुआ है।

# Saratchandra and Rabindranath

Hans Kumar Tiwary

That the genius of Rabindranath was multi-faceted and all pervasive is beyond a shadow of doubt. Whatever branch of literature he touched, he turned into glittering gold. But it is also indisputable that his appeal did not prove as widespread as Saratchandra's in the sphere of story writing. Although Saratchandra faced very bitter criticism and was slandered, he was, and still remains, very popular with his readers. There is simply one reason for this - he had the deepest sympathy and concern for the down-trodden, neglected and exploited group in society. This anguish and boundless compassion gave to his language such magic that it touched the right chord and delved deep into the soul of every reader, winning his affection and moistening his eyes, and thus becoming the language of every sensitive and compassionate heart. In the words of Sri Aurobinda "In every work of Saratchandra one finds a large-hearted liberal viewpoint, deep observation and a full glimpse of man's heart melting at the suffering of others.

Bengal was astounded at Rabindranath's versatile genius and the Bengali heart exclaimed :

Who could have held you  
Excepting the sky?

(Gagan nahilē tōmārē dharibē kēbā ?)

But it is the innate simplicity of Saratchandra that made him the bosom friend of the Bengalis. Mingling with the multitude, he seemed to be sharing their woes and giving vent to their stifled thoughts and desires. He did not cast fanciful glances at his country or fellowmen from Olympian heights, and did not evaluate man with any pre-conceived notion of good and evil. He went deep into the myriad of miseries, unimaginable sufferings, helplessness and bafflements that prey upon mankind, and sought his literary material with a heart full of love and eyes moist with sympathy. Of course, Saratchandra did not provide solutions to the problems raised by him ; did not give an answer to *Śēṣ Prasāna*. Saratchandra himself admitted : "In my works I have given no solutions, but posed the problems only . . . hope new writers will treat these problems with greater poignancy and clarity and give them real direction and solutions," But he wrote with the full strength of his pen about those festering sores that had poisoned

the very marrow of society. Harsh absurdities of social rules and norms had turned life, already haunted by diseases and stricken with penury, into an unbearable mockery. His natural and forceful exposition was directed towards a relentless struggle in defence of individual liberty writhing in bondage, articulation of the mute sufferings of oppressed humanity, and a re-discovery of the agony of tears dried up in the heat of torture. The resultant artistic success earned him everlasting laurels. And in this way, Saratchandra, a great lover of mankind, found abode in the hearts of common men. Rabindranath has himself written: "You have won the heart of the nation with your talent. You have the right of entrance to the depth of feeling of the common people. Your pen has ably portrayed the tears and smiles of the Bengali millions, your life's supreme offering will continue to tend the eternal flame of Bengali literature in a permanent niche in their heart's shrine...."

Saratchandra also had a very high opinion of Rabindranath. In a meeting at Chandan Nagar, organised by Prabartak Sangha, he had said: "It is doubtful if ever a person with Rabindranath's accomplishment will be born again in this world." In 1933, on the occasion of the Hooghly District Literary Conference, he had told Kanan Bihari Mukhopadhyay: "I tell everyone again and again that I have gained a lot from him. In our country there is nothing to compare with his works. Before him we all are nothing. It baffles me to imagine how such a genius was born in this country."

He was enamoured of the works of Rabindranath. *Chōkhēr Bālī*'s language and idea so enraptured him that he never forgot it. It was as if it had never before occurred to him that anything could be said with such perfection and that the reader could see his heart's image so clearly reflected in the picture of another's imagination. He had mentioned to Kabishekhar Kalidas Roy: "I have read *Chōkhēr Bālī* twenty four times and *Naṣṣa Nir* twenty times. And it is these two books that have been my initiators into literature." *Chōkhēr Bālī* gave a new direction to Bengali novel. If after *Durgēś Nandini* any book can lay claim to be an epoch maker in the field of Bengali novel, certainly that book is *Chōkhēr Bālī*. And the lead of tradition-breaking that Rabindranath has given in this book has found its fulfilment in Saratchandra's literature. This is why Saratchandra accepted him as his preceptor as well.

He had such real faith and respect for Rabindranath's literary works that, in 1913, in a letter to Upendra Nath Gangopadhyay he had written: "Today, apart from Rabindranath there is no other person as balanced as myself. Do not think that I am indulging in megalomania. You may call it my self-confidence, or even pride but this is my conviction." He had accepted the supremacy of Rabindranath's art of story-telling from the core of his heart, and many episodes bear witness to this. In a letter to Dilip Kumar Roy he had written: "If Buddhadeb Basu has said that Rabindranath is a far greater novelist than I, then he, Mantu, has only stated the truth. My heart knows it to be true, absolutely true." From Rangoon he had written to Pramathanath Bhattacharyya: "Pramatha, may I indulge in a pride? If you say so, I will. When you realise in the depth of your heart that the only person who can write a better novel or story than I is Rabi Babu, then and then only please approach me for my article, story or novel—not before that." He even went to the extent of acknowledging that even with effort he could not write like Rabindranath.

Not only novels. Saratchandra read and appreciated with the same gusto Rabindranath's poems as well. He came under the spell of diction of Rabindranath's poems. Some lines would automatically come to his lips:

I know it for certain  
That even the flower that withers  
And drops to ground ere it blooms,  
And the river that empties into the desert,  
Are not lost for ever.

(Jē phul nā phuṭitē, jhōṛēchhē dharaṇitē.....)

Even in sick-bed, he remembered Rabindranath's lines :

Bottles and containers of odd labels and sizes have piled up,  
More than the disease are the symptoms.  
And the doctors iterate,  
"You need a change of air."

(Nānān chhāpēr jamlō śīśi.....)

Of *Balākā* nearly every poem was at the tip of his tongue. When unwell, he would recite them one after another.

Equally charmed was he with Rabindranath's handsomeness. Robert Lynd had said : "Rabindranath Tagore is assuredly the most beautiful man I have seen in my life." Likewise, Saratchandra used to say "As if a Prince had strayed from the 'Gandharba Kingdom'<sup>1</sup> to the land of Bengal." Seeing him at the age of seventy six he had said to Abinash Chandra Ghoshal : "He has grown so old, but how beautiful he looks ! One does not wish to take one's eyes away from the figure."

He expressed his respect for Rabindranath on so many occasions. A mammoth meeting was held in Calcutta Town Hall in 1936 in protest against the Communal Award. In his presidential address Saratchandra had said : "What epithet of introduction can be prefixed or suffixed to this great name of Rabindranath ? World Poet, King of poets, etc., etc., have already been added by various people. But we, who are his disciples, merely refer to him as 'The Poet' amongst ourselves. To others we speak of him as Rabindranath, knowing that in the entire civilised world, from one corner to the other, there will be no problem in identifying and understanding the person . . ."

The All India Radio used to organise 'Sarat Sharbari' on the occasion of Saratchandra's birth anniversary. On the sixty second anniversary, that is, on the last such occasion, while replying to the felicitations, he had said "Standing at the threshold of my sixty second year, before seeking the blessings of any one else, I pay my homage to Gurudev, the World Poet, Rabindranath who is today in sick-bed. His blessings in literary pursuits in this world are not my individual treasure, they enrich every literature. Today, I seek from him this blessing of his." Not only this. While speaking at the Scottish Church College at a function organised on the occasion of his birth anniversary, he had incidently remarked "It is my exhortation to my fellow countrymen that on the demise of Rabindranath the country should observe national mourning for some days."

In 1916, Saratchandra came to Calcutta from Rangoon. As far as has been ascertained, he was introduced to Rabindranath in 1917, and this was done at a meeting of 'Bichitra' at Jorasanko by Rabindranath's childhood friend Charu Bandopadhyay. From an article in 'Shanibarar Chithi' by Nalini Kanta Bhattacharyya, it is gathered that when, in March 1918, Rabindranath read his article in 'Bichitra', Saratchandra was present at the meeting. That day Saratchandra was requested to read a story at the next sitting, and he read his story *Bilasī* in 'Bichitra'.

<sup>1</sup> Heavens, roughly.

Rabindranath also once visited Saratchandra's Calcutta residence, and recited there his poem *Chhabi* from *Balaka*.

However, despite close acquaintance frequent meetings, correspondence and exchange of comments on writings, those two could never be on intimate terms with each other. This becomes clear from a letter of Rabindranath. After the death of Saratchandra, for a special supplement of 'Bharatharsha', Prabodh Chandra Sanyal entreated Rabindranath to contribute something. At his request the poet wrote to him: "The emergence of Saratchandra in the arena of Bengali literature was a sudden occurrence. He was not long in passing from obscurity to fame. At that time because of pressure of work and difference in age, I remained aloof. Left Calcutta and in the meanwhile Sarat had reached the acme of his career. Never got the opportunity to meet Sarat at close quarters which I count as a personal loss. Not that we did not meet or talk. But real fervour could not develop. If instead of being confined to formal meetings and exchanges, our fellowship had ripened into genuine understanding it would have been much better."

Rabindranath had affection for Saratchandra, and had a discerning eye for his writing and talent. This is why he even wrote a poem on this great exponent of woman's cause. In 1932, writing *Punaścha* at Santiniketan he wrote a poem *Sādhūran Mēyē*. It is a famous poem. Some lines are:

I am a girl of a common household,  
You wouldn't recognise me  
Sarat Babu, I've read your latest—  
'Garland of wilted flowers  
Your heroine, *Ēlōkesī*  
At the age of thirty five  
Competed with one of twenty five  
Indeed you are great  
You made the former win.  
I beseech you, Sarat Babu, write a story  
Of an ordinary homely girl,  
A hapless one who has to contend from afar  
With six or seven most extraordinary ones—  
Like seven charioteers.  
I know it well, misfortune is my lot,  
I have lost the fight  
But of whom you write,  
Let her win, for my sake,  
Reading which one's heart will swell  
May your pen be twice blessed

Dilip Kumar Roy had translated Saratchandra's *Nishkṛti* into English. At the instance of the translator, Rabindranath had written the introduction. The translation had also been gone through by Sri Aurobinda. What he wrote in the introduction is only a proof of his faith in Saratchandra's writings and his deep affection for him. On his fifty-seventh birthday Rabindranath dedicated his drama *Kālēr Yātrā* to Saratchandra. After the words of formal dedication, he had written in acclaim: "On the occasion of your birthday I have dedicated my drama titled *Kālēr Yātrā* to you. I hope this gift will not be unworthy of you, the talisman of stopping the progress of Death's journey may be effectual on the tip of your pen. With this blessing I pray for your long life."

The teacher-disciple type relationship between the two was very sweet. Still, circumstances conspired to sour it and gradual estrangement resulted in unfavourable comments, verbal and written. There are certain chapters in the lives of these two colossuses of Bengali literature which are based on differences of opinion and misunderstandings. For instance, when Rabindranath returned from his foreign tour, he did not express his faith in Satyagraha and the spinning wheel. Saratchandra himself did not have any deep conviction in the spinning wheel, but he was an active Congress worker. When Gandhiji reached Calcutta, he stayed with Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das. There Saratchandra had a discourse with Gandhiji on the spinning wheel and said that he spun it only because of his devotion towards Gandhiji but Swaraj would be obtained only with the aid of arms. Still, Saratchandra was offended at Rabindranath's attitude. He complained and made derogatory remarks. But he had remorse as well. He himself wrote to Rabindranath: "I have committed a grave offence against you. I have certainly told people that you have changed a lot since returning from abroad. You no longer have the same love, attachment and affection for the people of Bengal. In the spinning wheel and Non co-operation movement you have no faith or trust.....I am one of your man disciples. Like them, till now, I have never maligned you. Alas, why was I so ill-affected this time?"

In an article *Sāhityēr Mātrā*, Kabiguru wrote something about novels. Saratchandra took umbrage at it. On learning this, Kabiguru wrote a letter to Saratchandra: "Sarat, from what I have seen in some magazines, I understand that it is your feeling that my article on novels contains allusion to your works as well. It appears to me that someone has made a fuss about it simply to excite you. My differences with you and Dilip may be due to my ignorance, but this is not my fault. But I shall deem it a crime if it be the objective of any writing of mine to attack you. I have not done so. Believe me."

In this very connection he had written a letter to Dilip Kumar Roy as well: "Some newsmen have just now informed me that Sarat thinks I am annoyed with him. Those who know me well can never make such a mistake. Sarat has committed no offence against me. You probably know, I have never expressed any disregard towards Sarat. From the very beginning, I have been continually praising him....."

The book *Pathēr Dābī* was proscribed. Saratchandra wrote to Rabindranath that a person of his eminence and stature should write and say something on this vital matter. Rabindranath did nothing of the sort, and the reply he sent did not appeal to Saratchandra. Annoyed at this, he wrote letters to a few friends which clearly express his mental anguish and disappointment. But these matters are not of much import to literature. What matters is that despite differences of opinion and occasional ill-will, Rabindranath and Saratchandra had enough affection and goodwill for each other. On every such occasion when one tilted at the other, there was heart-felt remorse.

*Translated by Umesh Joshi*

# ಸಂವೇದನಶೀಲ ಮಾನವ ಹಿತ್ತೈಷಿ ಶರತ್‌ಚಂದ್ರ

ಗುರುನಾಥ ಜೋಶಿ

ಅತ್ಯಂತಿಕ ಆದರ್ಶವಾದದ ಮತ್ತು ವಾಸ್ತವವಾದದ ಮಾರ್ಗವನ್ನು ಅನುಸರಿಸದೆ, ಶರಂಪರೆಯನ್ನು ಸಂಪೂರ್ಣವಾಗಿ ತ್ಯಜಿಸದೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಅತಿ ಆಧುನಿಕತೆಗೆ ಅಂಟಿಕೊಳ್ಳದೆ ಭಗವಾನ್ ಬುದ್ಧನಂತೆ ಸಾಹಿತ್ಯ ಪ್ರಪಂಚದಲ್ಲಿ ಮಧ್ಯಮಮಾರ್ಗವನ್ನು ಹಿಡಿದ ನಮ್ಮ ಯುಗದ ಸಂವೇದನಶೀಲ ಶ್ರೇಷ್ಠ ಮಾನವ ಹಿತ್ತೈಷಿ ಸಾಹಿತ್ಯಕಾರರೆಂದರೆ ಶರತ್‌ಚಂದ್ರ ಜಡ್ಡೋಪಾಧ್ಯಾಯರು. ಮಾನವರ ಹಿತಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ಹೋರಾಡಿದ ಮನುಷ್ಯನು ಮನುಷ್ಯನೇ ಅಲ್ಲವೆಂದು ಸಾರಿದವರು ಉಷಭಿಕ್ತದ ಶ್ರೇಷ್ಠ ಸಾಹಿತಿ ಅರಶೀರ್ ನವೋದಯವರು. ಅವರ ಈ ಹೇಳಿಕೆಗೆ ಶರತರು ಉತ್ತಮ ಪ್ರವೀಳರಾಗಿದ್ದರೆಂಬುದಕ್ಕೆ ಅವರ ಜೀವನಚರಿತ್ರೆ ಮತ್ತು ಕೃತಿಗಳೇ ಪ್ರಮಾಣ.

ಶರತರಲ್ಲಿ ಮಾನವನ ಹಿತಸಾಧನೆಗೆ ಬೇಕಾದ ಸದ್ಗುಣಗಳು ತುಂಬಿದ್ದುವು. ಅವುಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಅಪರಿಗ್ರಹ ಗುಣವೂ ಒಂದು. ಬಾಲ್ಯದಿಂದಲೇ ಶರತರಲ್ಲಿ ಅನಾವಶ್ಯಕ ವಸ್ತುಗಳ ಸಂಗ್ರಹ ಪ್ರವೃತ್ತಿ ಇರಲಿಲ್ಲ. ಯಾವುದರ ಬಗ್ಗೆಯೂ ಅವರಲ್ಲಿ ಮೋಹವಿರಲಿಲ್ಲ. ಆಟಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಗೆದ್ದುದನ್ನು, ಬೇರೆಯವರ ತೋಟಗಳಿಂದ ಕಾವಲುಗಾರರ ಕಣ್ಣು ತಪ್ಪಿಸಿ ತಂದ ಮಾವು, ನೇರಳೆ, ರೀತಿ, ಬೇರಲ, ಸೀತಾಫಲ ಮುಂತಾದ ಹಣ್ಣುಗಳನ್ನು ಗೆಳೆಯರಿಗೆ ಹಂಚುವಲ್ಲಿ ಇನ್ನೊಬ್ಬರ ಹೊಂದ ದಲ್ಲಿಯೂ ಮೀನಗಳನ್ನು ಹಿಡಿದು ಅಗತ್ಯವಿದ್ದವರಿಗೆ ಕೊಡುವಲ್ಲಿ ಅವರಿಗೆ ಆನಂದ. ಸಂಗ್ರಹಕ್ಕಿಂತ ದಾನ ಮಾಡುವಲ್ಲಿ, ಪರಿಗ್ರಹಕ್ಕಿಂತ ಅಪರಿಗ್ರಹದಲ್ಲಿ ಅವರಿಗೆ ಅವಿವೇಕವಿಲ್ಲ. ಅವರು ಜೀವನದಲ್ಲಿ ಸಾಕಷ್ಟು ಗಳಿಸಿದರು, ದಾನ ಮಾಡಿದರು, ಸಂಗ್ರಹಿಸಿ ಇಡಲಿಲ್ಲ. ತಮ್ಮ ಗ್ರಂಥಗಳ ಸ್ವಾಮ್ಯವನ್ನೂ ತಮ್ಮ ಅಧಿಕಾರ ದಲ್ಲಿದ್ದುಕೊಳ್ಳುವ ಮೋಹಕ್ಕೂ ಅವರು ಒಳಗಾಗಲಿಲ್ಲ. ಅವರೊಬ್ಬ ನಿರ್ಮೋಹಿ. ನಿರ್ಮೋಹಿಗಳಿಂದಲೇ ಮಾನವನ ಹಿತ ಸಾಧ್ಯ.

ಗುರುಹಿರಿಯರ ಸೇವೆ, ರೋಗಿಗಳ ಶುಶ್ರೂಷೆ, ಸಂಕಟದಲ್ಲಿ ಬಿದ್ದವರ ರಕ್ಷಣೆ, ಬಡವರಿಗೆ ಸಹಾಯ ಮಾಡುವುದು ಮಾನವ ಹಿತ್ತೈಷಿಯ ಗುಣಗಳು. ಇವು ಶರತರಲ್ಲಿ ಮನೆಮಾಡಿಕೊಂಡಿದ್ದವು. ಅಂತೆಯೇ ಕಲಕತ್ತೆಯಿಂದ ಫಾಗಲಪುರಕ್ಕೆ ಬರುತ್ತಿದ್ದ ಶ್ರೇಷ್ಠ ಹಿರಿಯ ಸಂಗೀತಗಾರರ ಮತ್ತು ಸಾಹಿತ್ಯಕಾರರ ಸೇವೆಯನ್ನು, ಹಾಗೂ ದುರ್ಗಾ ಪ್ರಾಜ್ಞ ದಿನಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಸಮಾಜಸೇವೆಯನ್ನು ಮಾಡುವಲ್ಲಿ ಶರತರು ಯಾವಾಗಲೂ ಮುಂದಿರುತ್ತಿದ್ದರು.

ಶರತರು ರಂಗೂನಿನಲ್ಲಿರುವಾಗ ಅವರಿಗೆ ಒಬ್ಬ ವಿಷ್ಣು ಮಠ ಬಂಗಲಾಬೂಡೇ ಒಬ್ಬವರ ಪರಿಚಯವಾಯಿತು. ಅವರು ಕಾಯಿಲೆ ಬಿದ್ದಾಗ ಶರತರು ಹಸಿವು-ದಾಯಾರಿಗಳ ಪರಿವೆಯಲ್ಲದೆ ಅವರ ಉಪಚಾರ ಮಾಡಿದರು. ಬಂಗಾಲಿ ಮೇಸ್ತ್ರಿಯೊಬ್ಬರ ಹೆಂಡತಿಗೆ ಚಿಕಿತ್ಸೆ ಮಾಡಿ ಬದುಕಿಸಿದರು. ರಂಗೂನಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಯಾರಾದರೂ ಸರಿಯೆ, ಅವರಿಗೆ ನಿಸ್ವಾರ್ಥತೆಯಿಂದ ಹೋಮನೋಪಥಿಯ ಚಿಕಿತ್ಸೆ ಮಾಡುತ್ತಿದ್ದರು. ಅಲ್ಲದೆ ಬಂಗಾಲಿ ಮೇಸ್ತ್ರಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಅವರು ನಾನಾ ರೀತಿಯಿಂದ ನೆರವಾಗುತ್ತಿದ್ದರು. ಅದರಿಂದಾಗಿ ಶರತರು ಅವರೆಲ್ಲರಿಗೂ "ದಾದಾ ರಾಕೂರ" ಅದರು. ಅವರು 12 ಫ್ರೆಬ್ರವರಿ 1333 (ಬಂಗಲಕ) ರಂದು ತಮ್ಮ ಮಿತ್ರರಿಗೆ



ಬರಿದ ಒಂದು ಪತ್ರದಲ್ಲಿ ಹೀಗೆ ಬರೆದಿದ್ದಾರೆ: 'ನಾನಿದೀಗ ಒಬ್ಬ ಅಂಚಿಗನ ಚಿಕಿತ್ಸೆ ಮಾಡಿ ಬರುತ್ತಿದ್ದೇನೆ. ಇಡೀ ಶರೀರಕ್ಕೆ ಟಂಕ್ಟುರ್ ಅಯೋಡಿನ್ ಹಚ್ಚಿ "ಆರ್ನಿಕಾ" ಸೇವನೆಯ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆ ಮಾಡಿ. ಮೈಕ್ಕೆ ಕಾಯಿಸುವ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆ ಮಾಡಿದ್ದೇನೆ. ನನ್ನ ರಾತ್ರಿ ಅವನ ಡೋಸಿ ಮುಳುಗಿದ್ದರಿಂದ ಅವನ ಮೇಲಿಂದ ಒಂದು ನಾವು ಹರಿದುಹೋಗಿತು.."

ಕಾಶಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಬಂಕಿಮಚಂದ್ರ ಮತ್ತು ಸವೀನಚಂದ್ರರ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಬಹಳಷ್ಟು ತಿಳಿದ ಬಾಲವಿಧವೆ ಮುಂದುಕೆಯೊಬ್ಬಳು ಇರುತ್ತಿದ್ದಳು. ಅವಳಿಗೆ ಶರತರು ಯಾರಿಗೂ ತಿಳಿಯದಂತೆ ಹರಿದಾಸ ಶಾಸ್ತ್ರಿಯವರ ಮುಖಾಂತರ ಹಣಕಾಸಿನ ಸಹಾಯ ಮಾಡುತ್ತಿದ್ದರು.

ಕೃತಜ್ಞತೆಯೂ ಒಂದು ಮಾನವೀ ಗುಣ. ಶರತರಲ್ಲಿ ಈ ಗುಣವು ಬಹಳ ಉಜ್ವಲವಾಗಿತ್ತು. ಶರತರ ತಾಯಿಯ ತಂಗಿಯ ಗಂಡ ಅಫೋರನಾಥ ಜಿಲ್ಲಾಧಿಕಾರಿಯವರು ರಂಗೂನದಲ್ಲಿದ್ದರು. ಶರತರು ಉಪಜೀವನದ ಮಾರ್ಗ-ಶೋಧಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ರಂಗೂನಿಗೆ ಹೋಗಿ ಅವರ ಮನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ತಂಗಿದರು. ಅಫೋರನಾಥರಿಗೆ ನಾನಾ ರೀತಿಯಿಂದ ನೆರವಾಗುತ್ತಿದ್ದರು. ಒಂದು ದಿನ ಆಕಸ್ಮಾತ್ ಅಫೋರನಾಥರು ತೀರಿಕೊಂಡರು. ಆಗ ಶರತರು ತಮ್ಮ ಚಿಕ್ಕಮ್ಮನನ್ನು ಅವಳ ಆರೈಕೆಗಾಗಿ ಕಲಿಕತ್ತಿಗೆ ಗುಪ್ತವಾಗಿ ಕಳಿಸಿ ಅವಳನ್ನು ಸಾಲಗಾರರ ಹೃದಯವೇನ ನಡವಳಿಕೆಯಿಂದ ಮುಕ್ತ ಮಾಡಿದರು ಮತ್ತು ತಾವು ಸ್ವತಃ ಬೌದ್ಧ ಛಿಕ್ಷುಕರಂತೆ ಅಲಿದಾಡಿ ಕಷ್ಟಪಟ್ಟಿದ್ದರು. ಹೀಗೆ ತಮ್ಮ ಚಿಕ್ಕಮ್ಮನ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಇದ್ದ ತಮ್ಮ ಕೃತಜ್ಞತೆಯನ್ನು ವ್ಯಕ್ತಪಡಿಸಿದರು.

ಶರತರ ಹೃದಯ ಅತ್ಯಂತ ಕೋಮಲ, ದಯಾಪೂರ್ಣ, ಪರರ ದುಃಖ ಕಂಡು ದುಃಖಪಡುವ ಜೀವ, ಪರೋಪಕಾರಿ ಜೀವ. ಸಂವೇದನಶೀಲತೆಯ ಎದುರಿಗೆ ಅವರ ಕುರಾಗ್ರ ಬುದ್ಧಿ ಬಾಗುತ್ತಿತ್ತು. ರಂಗೂನದಲ್ಲಿ ಇರುವಾಗ ಬಂಗಾಲಿ ಷಕ್ರವರ್ತಿ ಮಿಸ್ತ್ರಿ ಪ್ರಾಹ್ಮಣ ಮೆಕ್ಕಾನಿಕ್‌ರೊಬ್ಬರು ಹಣ ತೆಗೆದು ಕೊಂಡು ತಮ್ಮ ಮಗಳು ಶಾಂತಿದೇವಿಯನ್ನು ಓರ್ವ ಮಂದುಕನಿಗೆ ಮದುವೆ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಡುವುದರಲ್ಲಿದ್ದರು. ಇದನ್ನು ತಪ್ಪಿಸಲು ಹೋದ ಶರತರೇ ಆ ಬಡ ಕನ್ಯೆಯನ್ನು ಮದುವೆ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಂಡರು. ಇದಲ್ಲದೆ ರಂಗೂನದಲ್ಲಿದ್ದವಾಗಲೇ ಜೋರಾಕುಂಬ ಬಂಗಾಲಿಯೊಬ್ಬನನ್ನು ಬರ್ಮೀಸ್ ಸ್ತ್ರೀ ಯೊಬ್ಬಳ ಸಹವಾಸದಿಂದ ಮುಕ್ತಗೊಳಿಸಿ ಅವನ ಹೆಂಡತಿಗೆ ಒಪ್ಪಿಸಿ ಕಲಿಕತ್ತಿಗೆ ಕಳಿಸಿಕೊಟ್ಟರು. ಶರತರು ತಮ್ಮ ಸೋದರ-ಸೋದರಿಯರನ್ನು ಮರೆಯದೆ ಅವರಿಗೆ ನಿಯಮಿತವಾಗಿ ಹಣಕಾಸಿನ ನೆರವಾಗುತ್ತಿದ್ದರು. ಇದೇ ಸಮಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಅವರ ಪ್ರಥಮ ಪತ್ನಿ ತೀರಿಕೊಂಡ ಬಳಿಕ ಓರ್ವ ಅಸಹಾಯ, ನಿರ್ಧನ ಪ್ರಾಹ್ಮಣ ಕನ್ಯೆ ಹಿರಡ್ಡಿಯದೇವಿ ಯನ್ನು ಮದುವೆ ಯಾದರು. ಈ ಎಲ್ಲ ಘಟನೆಗಳು ಅವರು ಸಂವೇದನಶೀಲ ಮಾನವಹಿತ್ತೆ ಹಿಡಿಯಾಗಿದ್ದರಿಂದಾದವು ತೋರಿಸುತ್ತವೆ.

ಶರತರಿಗೆ ನಾರಿಯರ ವಿಷಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಅಪಾರ ಅನುಕಂಪ. ಅಂತೆಯೇ ಅವರು ನರ- ನಾರಿಯರ ಅಂತರಂಗದಲ್ಲಿ ಮೂಡುಯ್ಯದ ಅಸೀಮ ಐಶ್ವರ್ಯವು ಆಡಗಿದೆಯೆಂಬುದನ್ನು ತಿಳಿದಿದ್ದರು. ಅದರ ಶೋಧದಲ್ಲಿ ತಲ್ಲೀನರಾಗಿರುತ್ತಿದ್ದರು. ಸಮಾಜದ ಕಠೋರ ನಿಯಮಗಳ ವಿರುದ್ಧ ವಿಶೇಷವಾಗಿ ಹಿಂದೂ ನಾರಿಯರ ಆದರಲ್ಲಿಯೂ ವಿಧವೆಯರ ವಿರುದ್ಧವಿರುವ ಮತ್ತು ಹೃದಯವನ್ನು ತಳಮೇಗಲೋಸುವ ಅಪಾರವಿಚಾರಗಳ ವಿರುದ್ಧ ತಮ್ಮ ಲೇಖನಿಯನ್ನು ಎತ್ತಿದ್ದರು. ಶರತ ರನ್ನು ಕುರಿತು ಅನೇಕರು ತಮ್ಮ ಅನಿಶ್ಚಿತತೆಯನ್ನು ಹೀಗೆ ವ್ಯಕ್ತಪಡಿಸಿದ್ದಾರೆ.

"ನೀವು ಮನುಷ್ಯರಲ್ಲಿಯೇ ದೇವರ ದರ್ಶನ ಪಡೆದಿರೀರಿ. ಮನುಷ್ಯನ ಸೇವೆಯು ನಿಮ್ಮ ಜೀವನದ ಪ್ರತವಾಗಿತ್ತು. ಪ್ರೇಮದ ಮಹತ್ವವನ್ನು ನೀವೇ ಸಂಪ್ರತಿಷ್ಠೆಗೆ ತೋರಿಸಿದಿರಿ. ಪತಿತ ನಾರಿಯರ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ನಿಮ್ಮ ಅಂತಃಕರಣದಲ್ಲಿ ತೀರಸ್ವಾರವಿಧಿ. ಸಮವೇದನೆಯಿದ್ದಿತು. ಅನುಕಂಪವಿದ್ದಿತು. ಏಕೆಂದರೆ ನೀವು ಪತಿತ ಯಲ್ಲಿಯೂ ದೈವೀ ಶಕ್ತಿಯ ಮಿಂಚನ್ನು ಕಂಡಿರೀರಿ. ನಿಮ್ಮ ಜೀವನ ಮುಕ್ತಿಯ ವಾಣಿಯು ದಾರಿತಪ್ಪಿದ ಮಾನವರಿಗೆ ಪಥಪ್ರದರ್ಶಕವಾಗಲಿ."

ಶರತರಿಗೆ ಅವರ 57ನೆಯ ಹುಟ್ಟುಹಬ್ಬದ ಸಂದರ್ಭದಲ್ಲಿ ಬಂಗಾಲದ ನಾರಿ ಸಂಘಗಳು ಅರ್ಪಿಸಿದ ಅಭಿನಂದನಪತ್ರದಲ್ಲಿಯೂ ನಾರಿಯರ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಅವರಿಗಿದ್ದ ಅನುಕಂಪವು, ಸಹಾನುಭೂತಿಯು ಅಭಿವ್ಯಕ್ತವಾಗಿದೆ.

"ಬಡದೀದಿ"ಯಲ್ಲಿ ಬಾಲವಿಧವೆ ಮೂಢವಿಯ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ತೋರಿದ ಕರುಣೆ, "ಪರಿಣಿತಾ"ದಲ್ಲಿ ಗಿರೀಂದ್ರನಿಂದ ತೋರಿಸಿದ ಉದಾರತನ, 'ಗೃಹದಾಹ'ದಲ್ಲಿ ಮಹಿಮ ಮತ್ತು ಆತಲಾಳಿಂದ ಮಾಡಿಸಿದ ವಿರೋಧಿ, ವಿಶ್ವಾಸಘಾತಿ ಸುರೇಶನ ಸೇವೆ, 'ದೇವದಾಸ'ದಲ್ಲಿ ಚಂದ್ರಮುಖಿಯ ಜೀವನವನ್ನು ಪರಿವರ್ತಿಸಿ, ತಾಯಿಯ ಸಾಲಿಗೆ ಸೇರಿಸಿ ಕಂಡ ರೀತಿ, 'ಪರಿತ್ಯಹೀನ'ದಲ್ಲಿ ನಾರಿಯ ಅನೈತಿಕ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಸಹಾನುಭೂತಿ ತೋರಿದೆ, 'ಸಾವಿತ್ರಿಯ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ತೋರಿದ ಆದರ ಮತ್ತು ಎಶ್ವಾಸ, ಕಿರಣ್ಣಿಯ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ತೋರಿದ ಕರುಣೆ, 'ಶ್ರೀಕಾಂತ್'ದಲ್ಲಿ ರಾಜಲಕ್ಷ್ಮಿ, ಅನ್ನದಾದೀದಿ, ಮತ್ತು ಕಮಲರಿತಾ ಅವರ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ತೋರಿದ ಸಹಾನುಭೂತಿ, 'ಪಲ್ಲಿ ಸಮಾಜ'ದಲ್ಲಿ ರಮೇಶನ ಹಳ್ಳಿಯ ಸೇವೆ, 'ಚಂದ್ರನಾಥ'ದಲ್ಲಿ ಪಾಪಿಯ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ವ್ಯಕ್ತಗೊಳಿಸಿದ ಸಹಾನುಭೂತಿ, 'ಬಾಮುನೇರ್' ಮೇಯ'ದಲ್ಲಿ ಸಂಧ್ಯಾಳ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ತೋರಿದ ಕರುಣೆ, 'ಪಥೇರ್‌ದಾವಿ'ಯಲ್ಲಿ ಭಾರತಿಯ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ತೋರಿದ ಸಹಾನುಭೂತಿ ಹಾಗೂ ಅಪೂರ್ವವಾಗಿ ಪಾಂಡುನ ಮಾಡಿಸಿದ ರೀತಿ, 'ಮಹೇಶ'ದಲ್ಲಿ ಗರ್ವುರನ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ತೋರಿದ ಅನುಕಂಪ ಮುಂತಾದವು ಶರತರು ಸಂವೇದನಶೀಲ ಮಾನವ ಹಿತ್ತೆ ಹಿಡಿದು ಎಂಬುದನ್ನು ಎತ್ತಿ ತೋರಿಸುತ್ತವೆ. ಶರತರು ಮಹಾತ್ಮಾಗೆ

ದೇಶಬಂಧು ಚಿತ್ತರಂಜನದಾಸರ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಮಾಡಿದ ಭಾಷಣದಲ್ಲಿ ನಮುಃ ಶೂದ್ರ, ಮಾಯಾ, ನಟ, ರಾಜವಂಶಿ, ಪೋದ ಮುಂತಾದ ಅಸ್ಪೃಶ್ಯ ಅಂತ್ಯಜ ಜಾತಿಯವರ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ತೋರಿದ ಸಹಾನುಭೂತಿ, 'ಪಂಡಿತ ಮೊಶಾಯಿ'ಯಲ್ಲಿ ಎಲ್ಲ ಮಕ್ಕಳಲ್ಲಿ ತಮ್ಮ ಮಕ್ಕಳನ್ನು ಕಾಣುವ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಆದಿದ ಮಾಡುಗಳು ಶರತರು ಮಾನವ ಹಿತೈಷಿ ಎಂಬುದಕ್ಕೆ ಸಾಕ್ಷಿಯಾಗಿವೆ.

ಜನರು ಜಗಳಾಡುವದನ್ನು ತಪ್ಪಿಸಿ ಅವರನ್ನು ಒಂದುಗೂಡಿಸಿ ಅವರಲ್ಲಿ ಏಕ್ಯವನ್ನುಂಟು ಮಾಡುವುದು--ಮಾನವ ಹಿತೈಷಿಯ ಒಂದು ಒಳ್ಳೆಯ ಗುಣ; ಇದು ಶರತರಲ್ಲಿತ್ತು. ಶರತರು ಸಂಧಾನಪತುರರಾಗಿದ್ದರು. ಆದ್ದರಿಂದಲೇ ಬಂಗಾಳದ ರಾಜಕಾರಣಿಗಳು ಬಂಗಾಳದ ಎರಡು ಬಣಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಏಕ್ಯವನ್ನುಂಟು ಮಾಡಲು ಕೇಳಿಕೊಳ್ಳುತ್ತಿದ್ದರು; ಶರತರು ಬಂಗಾಳದ ರಾಜನೈತಿಕ ದಳಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಏಕ್ಯವನ್ನು ಉಂಟುಮಾಡುತ್ತಿದ್ದರು.

ಶರತರ ಸಮವೇದನಶೀಲತೆಯು ಮಾನವನ ಹಿತದ ವರೆಗೆ ಮಾತ್ರ ಸೀಮಿತವಾಗಿರಲಿಲ್ಲ; ಅದರ ಅದು ಪಶುಪಕ್ಷಿಗಳ ವರೆಗೂ ಹಬ್ಬಿತ್ತು. ಶರತರು ರಂಗೂನದಲ್ಲಿ ಹಿರಣ್ಮಯಿದೇವಿಯೊಡನೆ ಇರುವಾಗ ಅಗಸನ ಮನೆಯಿಂದ ಹೊರಟ ಬೆಂಕಿಯು ಶರತರ ಮನೆಗೂ ಹಬ್ಬಿತು. ಆ ಮನೆಯಲ್ಲಿದ್ದ ಒಂದು ಕುರಿಮರಿ ಯನ್ನು ಶರತರು ಜೀವದ ಹಂಗುತೊರೆದು ಉರಿಯುವ ಮನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಹೊಕ್ಕು ಹೊರತಂದು ಬದುಕಿಸಿದರು.

ಶರತರು ಒಂದು ಗಿಳಿಯನ್ನೂ ಸಾಕಿದ್ದರು. ಅದರ ಹೆಸರು ಬಟ್ಟಾ. ಅದರ ಮೇಲೆ ಶರತರ ಅಪಾರ ಪ್ರೀತಿ, ಅದೂ ಅವರನ್ನು ಪ್ರೀತಿಸುತ್ತಿತ್ತು. ಅದು ಸತ್ತಾಗ ಶರತರು ಅದರ ದಹನ ಸಂಸ್ಕಾರವನ್ನು ವಿಧಿವತ್ತಾಗಿ ನದಿಯ ದಂಡೆಯ ಮೇಲೆ ನೆರವೇರಿಸಿದರು.

ಶರತರು ಒಂದು ನಾಯಿಯನ್ನೂ ಸಾಕಿದ್ದರು. ಅದರ ಹೆಸರು ಮೇಲೂ, ಅದಕ್ಕೆ ಕಾಯಿಲೆಯಾಗಿದ್ದಾಗ ಶರತರು ಅದನ್ನು ಬದುಕಿಸಲು ಮಾಡಿದ ಪ್ರಯತ್ನ ಅಸದೃಶವಾದುದು. ಈ ವಿಷಯ ಅವರು 28-4-1925 ರಂದು ತಮ್ಮ ಮಿತ್ರರೊಬ್ಬರಿಗೆ ಹಾಡಾದಿಂದ ಬರೆದ ಪತ್ರದಿಂದ ತಿಳಿದು ಬರುತ್ತದೆ.

ಗುಜರಾತದ ಪ್ರಸಿದ್ಧ ಸಂತರಾದ ನರಸೀ ಮಹತಾ ಅವರು ತಮ್ಮ ಪ್ರಸಿದ್ಧ "ವೈಷ್ಣವ ಜನತೊ ತೇಣಿ ಕಹಿಯೆ, ಜಿ ಪೀಡಪರಾಯಿ ಜಾಣಿರೆ" ಎಂಬ ಕೀರ್ತನದಲ್ಲಿ ಅದರ್ಶ ವೈಷ್ಣವನನ್ನು ಬಣ್ಣಿಸಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಆ ಗೀತಕ್ಕೆ ಪ್ರತೀಕದಂತಿದ್ದರು ಶರತರಾದ್ದರು. ಅವರಲ್ಲಿ ಪರಮ ವೈಷ್ಣವೀ ಭಾವವಿದ್ದಿತು. ಅಂತೆಯೇ ಅವರು ಅನ್ನ,ರ ಪೀಡೆಯನ್ನು ಅರಿತಿದ್ದರು. ಪರರಿಗೆ ಉಪಕಾರ ಮಾಡುತ್ತಿದ್ದರು. ಪರಸ್ಪರಿಯರನ್ನು ತಾಯಿಯಂತೆ ಕಾಣುತ್ತಿದ್ದರು. ಮನೆಯ ಅಂಗಳದಲ್ಲಿ ತುಲಸಿಯನ್ನು ಹಚ್ಚಿದ್ದರು. ಸಂಧ್ಯಾವಂದನೆ ತಪ್ಪದೇ ಮಾಡುತ್ತಿದ್ದರು. ಭಜನೆಗಳನ್ನು ಸುಂದರವಾಗಿ ಹಾಡಿ ಜನಮನ ತಣಿಸುತ್ತಿದ್ದರು. ಇಂತು ಶರತರಾದ್ದರು ನಿಜವಾದ ವೈಷ್ಣವರಾಗಿದ್ದರು, ಮಾನವತೆಯ ಪೂಜಾರಿಯಾಗಿದ್ದರು; ಅವರು ಇದು ವರೆಗೆ ಸಾಹಿತ್ಯಪ್ರಪಂಚಕ್ಕೆ ಕಂಡ ಸಂವೇದನ ಶೀಲ ಶ್ರೇಷ್ಠ ಮಾನವ ಹಿತೈಷಿ ಯಾಗಿದ್ದರು. ಅವರ ನಿಜವಾದ ವೈಷ್ಣವೀಭಾವವನ್ನು ನಾವು 'ಚಂದ್ರನಾಥ'ದಲ್ಲಿ ಕಾಣುತ್ತೇವೆ

# Saratchandra :

## A great humanitarian

Gurunath Joshi

Saratchandra Chattopadhyay was a great humanitarian and a literary genius of our times, who, without following the path of extremes in respect of either idealism, realism, traditions, or modernism, trod the middle path in the literary world. He was a fitting example of the utterance of Alisher Navoi, a great Uzbek writer, that he who does not strive for the well-being of mankind, is not a man. Life and works of Saratchandra bear testimony to this.

We find in Saratchandra all the noble qualities of a humanitarian. Non-acquisition is one such. We do not find the acquisitive instinct in Saratchandra from his childhood. He had no attachment to anything. He had pleasure in distributing amongst his friends things won in plays, fruits like mangoes, purple berries, guavas, etc., stolen from others' gardens, and in giving away fish caught in tanks to needy persons. He had greater joy in giving than in acquiring. He earned a lot and gave it away. He even did not attach much importance to the copyright of his work. He was above greed. Humanitarian work is possible only by persons without any greed.

Service to elders, treatment of patients, protection of people in distress, and helping the poor are the qualities of a humanitarian. These qualities were in abundance in Saratchandra. That is why he was rendering service to great musicians and litterateurs who went to Bhagalpur from Calcutta, and was also offering his services to the society at the time of Durga Puja festivals.

While living in Rangoon Saratchandra came in contact with one Banga Babu who was a philosopher and thinker. When the latter fell ill, Saratchandra attended him without caring for his own hunger and thirst. He saved the life of a mistri's wife by his timely medical help. He was giving homoeopathic treatment to all who were in need of medical treatment. He was helping Bengali mistries in many ways. On account of his helping nature Saratchandra became *Thakur Dada* to all of them. On Srabana 12, 1333 B.S., Saratchandra wrote a letter to a friend : "I have just now returned after treating a boatman. I have applied tincture iodine to his whole body and made arrangements for medicine and warming his whole body. Yesterday his boat was drowned and another boat had passed over his body."

There was an old woman living in Benaras. She had become a widow at her teen age. She knew much about Bankimchandra and Nabinchandra. Saratchandra was helping her by sending money regularly through Haridas Shastri.

Gratitude is also one of the human qualities. Saratchandra had this quality in plenty. Aghornath Chattopadhyay, husband of Saratchandra's aunt, was living in Rangoon. Saratchandra went there in search of a job. He stayed in his aunt's house and was helping his uncle. But suddenly one day Aghornath passed away. Saratchandra sent his aunt secretly to Calcutta with all her ornaments and saved her from the clutches of creditors and money-lenders, and he himself went out of Rangoon for some days as a Boudhdha Sanyasi and suffered a lot. Thus he expressed his gratitude towards his aunt.

Saratchandra was very tender-hearted. He would be unhappy seeing others in misery. He was benevolent. His sharp intellect would bow down before his deep sensibility. While he was living in Rangoon, there also lived a Bengali Brahmin mechanic who had a daughter of marriageable age, Shanti Debi by name. Her father was about to marry her to an old man for the sake of money. Saratchandra tried to stop this unholy alliance, and in the end offered himself to marry her. Moreover, Saratchandra saved a Bengali, one Basak, from the clutches of a Burmese woman and sent him back to Calcutta along with his wife who had come in search of her husband. Saratchandra, while living in Rangoon, did not forget his brothers and sisters. He used to help them regularly by sending money. At this time his first wife died and Saratchandra married Hiranmayi Debi, a helpless poor Brahmin girl. All these facts show that he was a very sensitive soul.

Saratchandra had a great deal of compassion for womenfolk. That is why he realised that there was abundant richness of amiability (sweetness) and beauty in their heart. He was engrossed in search of it. He had taken up his pen against the rigid rules of the society, especially the rules and rites governing women and that again mostly for widows. Many have expressed their views about Saratchandra in this way :

"You have seen God in human beings. Service of humanity was your life mission. You are the person who established the importance of love. You had no disregard in your heart about fallen women, you had sympathy and compassion for them. You have seen the flash of divine power in them. Your voice of deliverance may serve as a torch for those who have gone astray."

Societies of women in Bengal gave an address of welcome to Saratchandra on the occasion of his fiftyseventh birthday. This bears testimony to his compassion for women and their genuine regard for their emancipator.

There are sterling examples to prove that Saratchandra was a great humanitarian ; for example, the kindness shown to Mādhavī, a young widow in *Baradidi* ; generosity shown by Girindra in *Pariṇītā* ; service rendered to traitor Surēś by Mahim and Achalā in *Gṛhadāha* ; transformation of Chandramukhi's life and Dēbdās looking at her by the side of his own mother in *Dēbdās* ; respect and confidence shown towards Sābitrī without showing sympathy for immoral deeds of women as also pity shown to Kiraṇmayī in *Charitrahin* ; sympathy shown to Rājlakṣmī, Annadādidi, and Kamal-latā in *Śrikānta* ; service to villagers by Ramēś in *Pallī-Samāj* ; sympathy expressed for sinners in *Chandranāth* ; pity shown to Bhāṭatī by saving the life of Apūrba from death sentence in *Pathēr Dābī* ; compassion shown to Gaphur in *Mahēś*, etc.

Again his words for Namashudra, Nayo, Nata, Rajawanshi, Pooda, etc.,—untouchables—in a speech on Chittaranjan Das, and all that has been said in *Paṇḍit Maśāi* about looking to every child as one's own bear testimony to the noble soul that Saratchandra was.

Settling the quarrels among people and establishing harmony among them is also a good quality of a humanitarian. By virtue of this quality Saratchandra was a peace-maker. That is why politicians of Bengal used to request Saratchandra to bring the warring parties together, and he would do so.

Sensibilities of Saratchandra were not limited to human beings, but were also extended to animals and birds. While he was living in Rangoon with Hiranmayi Debi, Saratchandra's house once caught fire from the neighbouring washerman's house. Saratchandra, without caring for his life, entered the burning house and brought out a lamb kid and saved it.

Saratchandra had reared a parrot whom he named 'Battu'. He loved it most. The bird too loved him most. When it died, Saratchandra performed its funeral rites on the bank of a river as per rites. He had also a pet dog 'Velu' by name. When it had fallen ill, he tried to save its life, but he could not succeed in his attempt. We know this fact from his letter written to a friend on 28.4.1925.

Narasī Mehta was a great Vaishnava saint of Gujarat and his devotional song 'Vaiṣṇava Janatō tēnē Kahiyē' is very famous. The saint has described the true qualities of a Vaishnava. According to me Saratchandra was a true Vaishnava, because he used to feel for others, and considered others' wives as his mothers and sisters. He had sympathy about fallen women. He had planted a Tulsi in his garden, used to perform 'sandhya' everyday and used to satisfy the people by singing Bhajans. Thus, Saratchandra Chattopadhyay was a true Vaishnava, worshipper of humanity and a great humanitarian in the literary world. We find his true Vaishnava feelings in his *Chandranāth*.

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കഥകൾക്കും, ടാഗോർ നോവലുകൾക്കും കൂടി ഇത്രയധികം സാമാന്യ ജനപ്രീതി കൈവന്നിട്ടുണ്ടെന്ന് പാകവയ്യ! ടാഗോർ കോളത്തിലെ ബുദ്ധി ജീവികളെയും എഴുത്തുകാരെയുമാണ് മുഖ്യമായും ആകർഷിച്ചത്. ചാറൻജിയാകട്ടെ കേരളത്തിലെ സാമാന്യവായനക്കാരെയാണ് വശീകരിച്ചത്. ചാറൻജിയുടെ “ദേവദാസ്” തമിഴിലും ഹിന്ദിയിലും ചലച്ചിത്ര രൂപം പൂണ്ടത് കേരളത്തിലെ തീയേറ്ററുകളിലും നല്ലൊരു നാടൻ കഥാചരിത്രംപോലെ ജനപ്രീതി നേടി “ഓടി”. ചതുരമനോന്റെ ‘ശാരദ’യെപ്പോലെയോ, തകഴിയുടെ ‘കുറുത്തമ’യെപ്പോലെയോ, ഉറബിന്റെ “ഉമ്മാച്ച” വിനെപ്പോലെയോ, ‘ദേവദാസി’ലെ നായികയായ പാർവതിയും കോളീയരുടെ സ്നേഹസഹതാപങ്ങൾക്ക് പാത്രീ വ്രാധായി ഇന്ന് സംസാഹിത്യത്തോടും, വംശീയ സിനിമയോടും കോളീയർക്ക് എന്തെങ്കിലും പ്രത്യേകമമതയുണ്ടെങ്കിൽ, അതിന് തുടക്കം കുറിക്കുകയും, വലിയൊളവിൽ ഉത്താവാദിത്വം വഹിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തിട്ടുള്ളത് ശാച്വ്രന്റെ സാമൂഹിക കഥാശില്പങ്ങളാണ്.

എന്നാൽ, ശാച്വ്രൻ സാഹിത്യത്തിന്റെ സാധനം ദേവദാസിത്വത്തിലെത്രമാത്രമുണ്ട്?—എന്ന ചോദ്യം ഇവിടെ പ്രസക്തമാണ്. പ്രത്യേകിച്ചൊരു സ്വാധീനം പൂണ്ടിട്ടാവാൻ വിഷമമാണ് എന്ന ഉത്തരം പ്രഥമ വ്രവണത്തിൽ ഓരോ സംശയാലുവാക്കിഷേക്കാം. എങ്കിലും അതൊരു വസ്തുതയാണ്. ശാൽക്കഥകൾ മലയാളത്തിലെ സാധാരണവായനക്കാരെ, വിശിഷ്ട ഗ്രന്ഥദാതാക്കളെപ്പോലുള്ള വീട്ടമ്മമാരാണ് ആകർഷിച്ചത്. ദുഷിച്ച സാമൂഹിക കഥാപാത്രങ്ങൾ മുൻനിർത്തി പൂർണ്ണമായും ദാർശ്വീക സമ്പ്രദായത്തിന്റെ ദാർശ്വീകതയെ പിന്തുടർന്നു, നിഷിദ്യം പീഡിതവുമായ ചരിത്രം ആ കഥകളിലായിരുന്നു. ദുരിതപ്പെട്ടവരെ ക്ഷമാശീലവും, സർവ്വസാധനമായ ദാർശ്വീകതയെ തോന്നിക്കുന്നവരും ആ കഥകളിലായിരുന്നു. ജനനാ സർവ്വഭാഷാകിലും, സാമ്പത്തികമായ അധഃസ്ഥിതിയും, സാമൂഹികാനാപാതകങ്ങളും മൂലമായിട്ടുണ്ടായ ഒന്നിലധികം തരത്തിലുള്ള ഇടത്തരം ബ്രാഹ്മണരുടെ ചുരുക്കത്തിൽ ആർത്തോടും സഹനത്തോടും കൂടി പിന്തുടർന്നിരുന്നതിൽ ചാറൻജി നേടിയ വിജയം ഏതു ദേശത്തെയും വായനക്കാരെ ചലിപ്പിച്ചിരിക്കുവാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞതാണ്. ജ്ജ്വലം സാമൂഹികമായ ആ ആഖ്യാനീതിയാലും വികാസശക്തിയെ അനന്യമായി വർദ്ധിപ്പിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു. ബുദ്ധിജീവികളെയും എഴുത്തുകാരെയും പ്രത്യേകം ആകർഷിക്കുന്നവിധത്തിലുള്ള ശില്പപരമായ അടങ്കൽ പൂർവ്വതയോടെ, അപൂർവ്വ സൗന്ദര്യവർദ്ധകതയോടെ, ദാർശ്വീകതയുടെ അതേ വ്യോമകളോടൊന്നും ആ കഥകളിലുണ്ടായിരുന്നു എന്ന് പാകവയ്യ! അതുകൊണ്ടുതന്നെയാണോ, കഥകൾക്കായിട്ട് “ഭാഷാഭാരതം” പോലെയുള്ള പത്രം ശാൽക്കഥകൾ റസിറ്റിപ്പിച്ചുവെങ്കിലും അതിവിടെത്തെ സർഗ്ഗപരതയെ സ്വാധീനിച്ചില്ല എന്നതാണ്. ചാച്വർ, ടാഗോറവരും, ഇവിടെത്തെ സാമാന്യവായനക്കാരെ ആകർഷിച്ചതിനെക്കാൾ കൂടുതൽ ബുദ്ധിജീവികളെയും എഴുത്തുകാരെയുമാണ് ഒരു കാലഘട്ടത്തിൽ വലിയൊളവിൽ സ്വാധീനിച്ചത്.

1889-ൽ, അതായത് രാച്വര പരിമുഖനായ വ്യക്തി പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ, മലയാളത്തിൽ ആദ്യത്തെ സാമൂഹിക നോവലായ “ഇരുപലവർ” പ്രകാശിതമായി. ഉന്നതാർത്ഥശാസ്ത്രങ്ങളുടെ ഒരു ശ്രോതാവ് സെക്സ്റ്റ് ആണു് പ്രദർശിപ്പിച്ചതെങ്കിലും, ചതുസ്തന്ത്രീയയിലും പ്രശ്നാധിഷ്ഠിതത്തിലും ചതുരമനോൻ കാട്ടുന്ന അപൂർവ്വ ഭംഗിയും വൈദഗ്ദ്ധ്യവും ഏതു സാധാരണക്കാരനെയും വശീകരിക്കുവാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞിട്ടുള്ളതാണ്. ശാച്വ്രകഥകളിൽ, സാമ്പത്തികമായ ഭരണത്തോടുള്ള ബ്രാഹ്മണ കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളാണധികമെങ്കിൽ, “ഇരുപലവർ”യിൽ അതിസമ്പന്നമായ ബ്രാഹ്മണസമുദായത്തിലെ പ്രമാണികളിലൊരാളെയാണ്, അയാളുടെ എല്ലാ പാപാപസ്യ വർഗ്ഗ സമാധാനത്തോടും കൂടി അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നത്. നിയന്തര മല്ലാ, യഥാസ്ഥിതികത്വവും മാർഗ്ഗം പ്രദർശനം ചതുരമനോൻ വിരൽ ചൂണ്ടുന്ന സാമൂഹികദോഷങ്ങൾ. രാച്വരൻ, യഥാസ്ഥിതികത്വത്തെ എതിർത്തത് വ്യക്തമായ ഒരു ലക്ഷ്യത്തിലാണ്. അവയോട് എന്തെങ്കിലും സാമൂഹിക കണ്ടെത്തലുള്ള ജീവിത പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾ മലയാളത്തിൽ ആകെങ്കിലും അവതരിപ്പിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടെങ്കിൽ അതെന്ന, അത് 1930-നടുപ്പിച്ചു മുതലിങ്ങോട്ടു ഭവനാൽ നമ്പൂതിരിപ്പാടിന്റെ ‘അപ്രഥമൻകഥകൾ’ എന്ന

ദേവ്, തകഴി, പൊറൊക്കാട്ട്, ബഷീർ, മാണുവേലായുധൻ തുടങ്ങിയവരാണ് പത്തു മേനോന്റെ പാരമ്പര്യത്തെത്തുടർന്നുവന്ന മലയാള നോവലിസ്റ്റുകൾ. അവരുടെ കൃതികൾ സമുദായത്തിന്റെ അടത്തുകളിലേക്ക് വായനക്കാരെ കൂട്ടിക്കൊണ്ടുപോകുന്നു. ദാരിദ്ര്യവും സമ്പത്തിക ഭക്തശബ്ദം മുഖമധിശ്വാസങ്ങളും, മാമുലുകളുമെല്ലാം അവരുടെ കൃതികളിലും തുറന്നുകാട്ടപ്പെട്ടിട്ടുണ്ട്. പക്ഷെ, ഗോർക്കിയുടെയും, ചെഖോവിന്റെയും, മൂശോവിന്റെയും കൃതികളിൽ നിന്നുറക്കപ്പെട്ട ഒരു സഞ്ചിത സംസ്കാരത്തിന്റെ സ്വാധീനമാണ് അവരുടെ കൃതികളിലുള്ളത്. 'ഇന്ത്യയിലെ സാഹിത്യത്തിന്റെ മുന്നേറ്റം' എന്നാണ് മുന്നേറ്റം എന്നും, അത് മാത്രം. എന്നാൽ, ജി. ശങ്കരക്കുറുപ്പിന്റെ കാവ്യജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ഒരു ഘട്ടത്തിൽ ടാഗോർ സ്വാധീനം വ്യക്തമായി കാണാവുന്നതാണ്. ടാഗോർ, അദ്ദേഹം സാഹിത്യത്തിന്റെ സ്വാധീനം മലയാളത്തിലെ എന്തെങ്കിലും ഒരു കഥാകൃത്തിലോ നോവലിസ്റ്റിലോ ചൂണ്ടിക്കാട്ടുക സാധ്യമല്ല. അതേസമയം ശരച്ചന്ദ്രൻ തന്റെ മലയാള പരിഭാഷകളിലൂടെ മലയാളത്തിലെ വായനക്കർക്കിടയിൽ കൂടുതൽ ഇഷ്ടമോ പ്രിയമോ നേടിയ വംശസാഹിത്യകാരനാണ്. അതുതമിഴിൽ ടാഗോർ കവികളുടെ കവിയാചിന്ത, ശരച്ചന്ദ്രൻ സാധാരണക്കാരന്റെ പ്രിയപ്പെട്ടവനും വിശ്വാസ്യമായ കഥാകാരനായിരുന്നു.



# Saratchandra Chatterji :

## A Malayalee's view

O N V Kurup

To the question, who, among the novelists of other Indian languages, has been most translated into Malayalam, there can be only one answer—Saratchandra Chatterji. As far as I know, more than two dozen novels of Saratchandra have come out in their Malayalam version. Some of the novels have more translations than one. For example, *Pariṇītā* has been rendered into Malayalam by both P. V. Rama Warriar, and Karur Narayanan ; *Bindur Chhēlē* by K. Surendran, and P. A. Thampi ; *Dēbdās* by N. V. Krishna Warriar, and T. C. Bhaskaran Moos ; *Śrikānta* has been translated in full by Moos, and in parts by Narayanan. Some of these translations came out in the pre-Independence years. In the post-Independence decade many new translations appeared in addition to the new editions of earlier translations. One significant point about these translations is that they were not the result of the efforts of any organizations like *Sahitya Akademi* or similar Cultural Literary Institutions on the lines of the recently adopted Cultural Exchange Programme. It is a simple story how these translations came into being. Someone familiar with and interested in Bengali literature translated one of the novels and the reading public enthusiastically received it. Publishers, seeing this tremendous response, might have encouraged translators. And in quick succession two dozens of Saratchandra's novels came out in their Malayalam version.

In Kerala, with its very high percentage of literacy and powerful 'library movement', these translations became extremely popular among the middle classes, especially among the womenfolk. And Saratchandra's name is cherished as dearly as the names of the eminent Malayalam novelists. His name has become a *household word*. The new trends and influences in literature have not affected his popularity. In spite of the new tastes and sensibilities that have altered the form, style, and content of the 'Novel', Saratchandra is still popular among the Malayalees. Not even Tagore's stories and novels have had such recognition among the common readers. While Tagore's influence was chiefly on the intellectuals and writers of Kerala, Saratchandra touched the heart of the common man. The Tamil and Hindi film versions of *Dēbdās* were box-office hits in the theatres of Kerala—attracting as large crowds as any Malayalam feature films. The Malayalee's heart goes out in love and sympathy to Pārbatī, its heroine. She

has her place in his heart along with the most beloved heroines of Malayalam fiction, Chandu Menon's *Sāradā*, Thakazhi's *Karuthāmmā* and Uroob's *Ummachu*.

If today the Keralites have a special liking for the Bengali film and literature, it is to a large extent owing to Saratchandra's social novels. But the question arises What exactly has been the impact of Saratchandra's works on Malayalam fiction? To what extent has he influenced it? It is difficult to believe that such a popular novelist had little influence. Yet that is the truth. As has been pointed out earlier, Saratchandra's novels had the widest readership among the common people, especially among the housewives. They saw in his novels the picture of the Indian woman—grief-stricken and writhing under the intolerable ordeals imposed upon her by a tradition-bound custom-ridden society. They saw there her face in the glory of total self-denial, patient like Mother Earth, and like her all suffering. The success Saratchandra achieved in depicting with deep sympathy and understanding the problems of the high born but destitute Brahmins, crushed under the wheels of an evil and superstitious society, is enough to move any heart—even that of a non-native. His simple and direct style of narration makes communication of emotions easy. But it cannot be claimed that these works are informed by elements that normally attract the intellectuals and writers—such as architectonic originality, uniqueness in the revelation of unsuspected beauties, inner springs of vision or philosophy. That probably is the reason why, in spite of the fact that Saratchandra's novels delighted every one who loved to listen to a story, they could not exert any influence on the creative mind of Kerala. On the other hand, Tagore had a powerful impact on the Malayalee intellectuals and writers of a particular age, though he was far less popular among the common readers than Saratchandra.

In 1889 (when Saratchandra was just thirteen years old) the first social novel in Malayalam *Indulēkhā* was published. It dealt with a cross section of the high caste Hindu. The originality that Chandu Menon shows in the treatment of the theme, in characterisation—the sheer beauty of it—is powerful enough to attract universal readership. The majority of Saratchandra's characters are Brahmins crushed under poverty. But in *Indulēkhā*, Chandu Menon presents a typical wealthy Brahmin, a feudal lord, and through him exposes and ridicules the follies and foibles that characterise the class. Chandu Menon aims his darts not at poverty, but at conservatism and orthodoxy as social evils. When, later, Saratchandra attacked conservatism, it was on a different plane. If at all a vague parallel to this is to be looked for, it is in Bhavathrathan Namboodiripad's *Apphantē Makal*, published in 1930, and in a few social dramas written and staged by the famous social reformers like V T Bhattathiripad and his disciples. The agonies of the Namboodiri girl who, after puberty, is forbidden the light of the day, the custom that only the eldest son of a Namboodiri shall enter into legal wedlock in the same community, and the consequent frustration of emotions that the sons and daughters of the younger members suffer, the enthusiasm among the Namboodiri youth for modernity, the clash between the modern and the orthodox—these were the themes of the reformist dramas and novels. They also depicted the 'Suffering Woman'. But in background and colour they stand apart from Chatterji's *Women*. The propagandist and missionary elements, that, as Humayun Kabir points out, manifest themselves in Chatterji's last novels, dominate the works of V T. and his followers.

After Chandu Menon, Malayalam fiction passed into the hands of writers like Kesava Dev, Thakazhi, Pottakkad, Basheer, Uroob etc. Their novels take us to the lowest strata of the society. The poverty, sufferings, and the superstitious customs of the downtrodden find powerful expression in their novels. If at all one is to speak of *other influences* on these writers, one can think only of the cumulative influence of Gorky, Chekhov, and Hugo. At

a particular stage in G. Sankara Kurup's poetic life, his poetry bears the unmistakable imprint of Tagore. But it is impossible to point out in a similar manner Saratchandra's influence on any Malayalam novelist. Yet Saratchandra, through translation, has endeared himself to the ordinary Malayalee.

No wonder, Tagore was the poet of poets, and Chatterji the beloved and faithful story-teller of the 'ordinary man'.

# शरच्चंद्रांचा मराठी साहित्यावरील प्रभाव

वसंत बापट

इ० स० १८५७ मध्ये, म्हणजे पहिली बंगाली कादंबरी दुर्गेशनंदिनी प्रसिद्ध होण्यापूर्वी सात वर्षे, यमुनापर्यटन ही पहिली मराठी कादंबरी प्रसिद्ध झाली होती. परन्तु त्यानंतर मात्र लवकरच बंगाली कादंबरीने मराठी कादंबरीपुढे मजल मारली. अनेक बंगाली कादंबऱ्यांच्या मराठी भाषांतर-रूपांतरावरून हे दिसते. १८९८ साली आनंदमठ प्रथम भाषांतरित झाली. त्यानंतरच्या पंचवीस वर्षांत जोगेंद्रनाथ चटोपाध्याय, तारकनाथ गंगोपाध्याय, बंकिमचंद्र, चंडीरमण सेन यांच्या आणि नंतर रवींद्रनाथ, शरदबाबूच्या कादंबऱ्यांची मराठी मध्ये भाषांतरे झाली. मराठी कादंबरी त्या काळात छोट्यात भरण्यासारखी प्रगती वेगाने करीत होती हे लक्षात घेतले तर बंगाली कादंबऱ्यांची एवढी भाषांतरे झाली त्याचे अधिकच नवल वाटते. हरि नारायण आपट्यासारखे मातबर लेखक मराठी कादंबरीची समृद्धी वाढवीत होते आणि इतरही कादंबरीकार उदयाला येऊन मराठी कादंबरीची विविधता वाढवीत होते. तरीही बंगाली कादंबऱ्यांचे—विशेषतः बंकिमचंद्रांचे—आकर्षण निर्माण व्हावे ही गोष्ट त्यांच्या गुणवत्तेची निदर्शक आहे. मनोरंजनकर्ते काशिनाथ रघुनाथ मित्र, विठ्ठल सीताराम गुर्जर, वासुदेव गोविंद आपटे यांनी बंगाली कादंबऱ्यांची भाषांतरे लोकप्रिय केली. अनेक प्रकाशन संस्थानां तर इंग्रजी, बंगाली कादंबऱ्यांची भाषांतरे प्रसिद्ध करून त्यावरच आपली गुजराण चालविली होती. स्कॉट, ड्यूमा, हेन्‍री वूड, मेरी कॅरिली, जेन ऑस्टेन, जॉर्ज ईलियट अशा लेखकांबरोबरच जोगेंद्रनाथ चटोपाध्याय, बंकिमचंद्र, प्रभातकुमार मुखोपाध्याय, रमेशचंद्र दत्त, रवींद्रनाथ या प्रथितयश बंगाली लेखकांनीही भाषांतर-रूपांतरकारांना भाऊ टाकले होते. १८७४ ते १९२० या काळात मराठीत अनुवादित झालेल्या विविध कादंबऱ्यांची संख्या पाहिली तर फार उद्बोधक निष्कर्ष निघतो. या काळात एक तमीळ, दोन उर्दू, पाच गुजराती, तेरा हिंदी, एकोणसाठ बंगाली आणि अठ्ठयाणव इंग्रजी कादंबऱ्या मराठीत आल्याची नोंद आहे. बंगाली कादंबरीचा प्रभाव मापण्याचे हे एक लक्षणीय साधन आहे. कारण इंग्रजी खालोखाल त्यांचीच संख्या छोट्यात भरते. याशिवाय आपण हे लक्षात घेतले पाहिजे की, पुष्कळशी उसनवारी नोंदली जात नाही. उसनवारी शिवाय अप्रत्यक्ष प्रभाव आणि कथाबीजांची उचल किंवा नक्कल याचा भाग देखील पुष्कळ असतो. १९२० पर्यंत खूद महाराष्ट्रात कादंबरीची विभिन्न रूपे प्रकट होत असताना बंगाली कादंबरीचा प्रभावही मराठी कादंबरीवर भरपूर पडलेला आहे. पार्श्वभूमी लक्षात घेतली तर एक अचंबा वाटतो. शरच्चंद्र चतर्जीसारख्या प्रतिभासंपन्न कादंबरीकाराच्या सामर्थ्याची जाणीव महाराष्ट्राला त्यांच्या प्रभावाची योग्य वेळ टक्कन गेल्यावर झाली. १९२० मध्येच शरदबाबूच्या 'दत्ता' या कादंबरीचा 'विजया' या नावाने मराठीत अनुवाद झाला होता ते जरी खरे असले तरी शरदबाबूची कला त्यावेळेस नजरेत मात्र भरली नाही. याचे कारण कदाचित हा अनुवाद चांगला उतरला नव्हता हे असेल किंवा मराठी वाचकांची अभिरुची वेगळी होती हे ही असेल. पण शरदबाबूच्या मृत्यूनंतरच त्यांना वाचकांच्या मनात मानाचे स्थान मिळाले हे निश्चित. शंकर बाळाजी शास्त्री, पुं. बा. कुलकर्णी, देसाई आणि मामा वरेरकर यांच्या अविरत प्रयत्नांमुळे आणि लोकविलक्षण जिद्दीमुळे शरदबाबूच्या साहित्याची गोडी मराठी वाचकांना लागली. मामा वरेरकरांचे प्रचंड कार्य तर विशेष मोलाचे आहे. कारण त्यांनी शरदबाबूची कादंबरी घराघरात पोहोचविली. ज्याप्रमाणे पूर्वी का. र. मित्र, गुर्जर, शास्त्री असे अनेक अनुवादक असूनही संपूर्ण बंकिमचंद्र

निष्ठापूर्वक अनुवादित करणाऱ्या वा. गो. आपटयांचे श्रेय सर्वाधिक ठरते. त्याप्रमाणे नंतरच्या काळात शरच्चंद्रांच्या सर्व अनुवादकांत मामांची कामगिरी विशेष मोलाची आहे. शरदबाबूंच्या बडदिदी, बिराजबहू, परिणीता, पंडितमोशाय, पत्नी समाज, चंद्रनाथ, जरबणीया, निष्कृति, चरित्रहीन, गृहदाह, देवदास आणि मुख्य म्हणजे चार खंडातील आत्मकथनपर दीर्घ कादंबरी श्रीकांत यांचे मराठी अवतार मामांच्या लेखणीद्वारे प्रकट झाले. मामांचे श्रेय केवळ अनुवादित कादंबऱ्यांच्या संख्येवरून ठरत नाही तर शरदबाबूविषयीची मार्मिक जाण आणि शरदविश्वाचे विशाल आणि सखोल दर्शन ही मामांच्या भाषांतरांची वैशिष्ट्ये आहेत.

शरदबाबूंचे बहुतांश साहित्य त्यांच्या मृत्यूनंतर मराठीत रूपांतरित झाले १९४१ ते १९५० या कालखंडात हे काम झाले. परन्तु हा काळ शरत्साहित्याच्या स्वागताच्या दृष्टीने फारसा अनुकूल नव्हता. एक तर दुसरे महायुद्ध आणि त्यामुळे निर्माण झालेल्या विराट समस्या याने मानवसमाज भांबावून गेला होता परिस्थितीने निर्माण केलेली आव्हाने केवळ अपूर्व होती. कला आणि साहित्य यांच्या अतः प्रवाहात जमीन अस्मानाचा फरक झाला होता. जगाचा राजकीय भूगोल पार पालटून गेला होता आणि मानवाच्या भवितव्या-विषयीचा जुना आशावाद हास्यास्पद झालेला होता. खुद्द भारतात आक्रोश आणि किंकाळ्या यांच्या समवेत स्वातंत्र्य सूर्य उगवला होता. युद्धामुळे खंडेयातले, शहरातले शांत वातावरण गढळले होते. भीतीची आणि अस्थिरतेची जाणीव यांमुळे सामाजिक आणि वैयक्तिक जीवनाचे रंग सतत बदलत होते. अशा वेळेला शरदबाबूंची कादंबरी मराठीत अवतरली. त्यांमुळे संध गतीच्या ग्रामीण जीवनातल्या शाश्वत नीति मूल्यांचा आविष्कार घडवीत आणि मानवी चांगुलपणाचा आधार घेत लिहिलेल्या या साहित्याच्या स्वागताला मुहूर्त प्रतिकूलच लाभला असे म्हणावे लागते. आता हे खरे की, शरदबाबू आपल्या साहित्यात समकालीन कथा गुपीत असूनही चिरंतन मानवी नाट्यांची कोडी निर्माण करतात. तरीही मध्ययुगाचे अवशेष असलेल्या जमिनदारी ग्रामीण जीवन पद्धतीची चौकट त्यांच्या साहित्याला आहे हे मान्य करावे लागते. परन्तु ही गोष्ट फावल्या वेळामध्ये हाती लागेल ते साहित्य वाचनाऱ्या सामान्य वाचकाच्या एकदम ध्यानात येण्यासारखी नाही. शरच्चंद्रांची एखादी श्रेष्ठ कलाकृती वाचत असताना वाचकाच्या दृष्टी कदाचित उचबळून येतोलही, पण शरच्चंद्रांच्या प्रतिभेचे सम्यक् स्वरूप लक्षात येण्यासाठी शरत्साहित्याने भारावलेला वाचक पाहिजे. त्यांच्या प्रतिभेची व्याप्ती, त्यांच्या साहित्याच्या आशयाची सखोलता, नास्तिक्याच्या दर्शनी खडकामागे झुकझुकणारी त्यांची अखंड आध्यात्मिकता, प्रचंड चित्रफलकावर त्यांनी रंगविलेल्या शेकडो व्याक्तिचित्रांचे विश्व आणि या कलंदर भटक्याने निर्माण केलेले जीवनविषयक तत्त्वज्ञान या सर्वांचा प्रत्यय शरत्साहित्यात आकठ बुडी घेणाऱ्या वाचकोत्तमानाच येईल. शरदबाबूंचे हे सामर्थ्य म्हणजेच कालदृष्ट्या मर्यादा ठरली. ज्या तऱ्हेच्या आश्वस्त आणि स्तब्ध दृष्टीने शरत्साहित्याचा आस्वाद घ्यायला हवा ती दृष्टीच या शुद्ध काळात अशक्य झाली होती. शरदबाबूंच्या प्रतिभेचा पन्ना मोठा आहे. त्यांच्या कथांना स्वयंभू धीमी चाल आहे. शरच्चंद्र ही एका घोटात गिकून टाकण्या सारखी गुटिका नाही. त्यांच्या साहित्याचा रस कसा नजाकतीने, खानदानी रीतीने हळू हळू चाखत रहायला पाहिजे. त्याशिवाय हे साहित्य जिथ्हारी भिडणार कसे ? १९४१ ते ५० या दशकातील वाताहतीमुळे हे सारे अशक्य होऊन बसले होते. जमिनदारी अर्थव्यवस्था आणि गुंतागुंतीची जातिव्यवस्था यांच्यामुळे अधोगतीला जाणाऱ्या समाजाचे चित्रण शरदबाबूंनी केले आहे कोणी म्हणेल ग्रामीण भारताचे हे चित्र कोणत्याही भारतीय प्रदेशात सारखेच अनुभवाला येईल. पण सूक्ष्म निरीक्षकाला भारताच्या वेगवेगळ्या भागातील जीवनपद्धतींमधले दोबळ फरक तरी निश्चित जाणवतील. बंगालमधील जमीनदार आणि महाराष्ट्रातील शेतमालक हे एकसारखे नाहीत, दोन्ही प्रदेशातील भूमिधारण अगदी भिन्न पायावर उभारलेले आहे. साहजिकच त्यांच्या जीवनक्रमातही महदतर आहे आणि तज्जन्य सामाजिक चालीरीतीही भिन्न आहेत. बंगाल आणि महाराष्ट्र यांच्या ग्रामीण जीवनातील समस्याही म्हणूनच कितीतरी भिन्न आहेत. शरच्चंद्रांच्या कादंबऱ्या मराठी वाचकाला त्यामुळेच परदेशीच वाटतात. शरदबाबूंची साहित्य दृष्टी वास्तववादाचा आत्यंतिक आग्रह धरणारी नाही, तशीच ती स्वप्नाळू रोमॅटिक ही नाही. दोन्हीचा सुरेख सगम त्यामध्ये आहे. त्यांच्या कादंबऱ्यांना आपण प्रादेशिक सीमेतल्या कादंबऱ्या म्हणू शकणार नाही हार्डीप्रमाणेच, तुमचे लक्ष एखाद्या प्रदेशावर खिळवीत असतानाच ते आपल्या कथेतील विश्वात्मकता तुमच्या मनावर ठसवितात, हे मान्य केले तरीही लेखकाने चित्रित केलेले वातावरण वाचकाला बरचसे अपरिचित असेल तर काही प्रश्न निर्माण होणारच. त्यातही शरदबाबू सारखे कथाकार वातावरणाची योजना पार्श्वभूमी सारखी करीत नाहीत, तर आपली प्रतिसृष्टीच त्यातून मूर्तिमंत साकार करतात. अशा वेळी लेखकाशी संपूर्णपणे समरस होणे वाचकाला मोठे अवघड जाते. मराठी वाचक शरत्साहित्य वाचताना या अनुभवातून निश्चित जातो.

या शिवाय अनुवादांच्या प्रतिकूलतेचाही घटक भरीस भर म्हणून येतो. शरत्साहित्याचा मराठी अनुवाद करण्यासाठी मामा वरेरकर

ही फार योग्य व्यक्ति होती यात शंका नाही. मामांचे गद्य परवी अगदी सरळ, व्यवहारातील आणि तरीही सुंदर असते. समाज आणि साहित्य यांच्याकडे पहाण्याची त्यांची जी दृष्टि आहे तिच्यामुळेच हे गुण त्यांच्या शैलीला प्राप्त झाले आहेत. शरदबाबू प्रमाणेच त्यांनाही सामान्य माणसाविषयी आस्था आहे आणि समाजाच्या अधःस्तरावरील जीवन चित्रित करण्याचा त्यांनी नेहमीच आप्त धरला आहे. शरदबाबू प्रमाणेच त्यांनाही कृतक भावनाप्रधानता आणि पाठित्य-प्रदर्शन यांचा तिटकारा आहे. हया बरोबरच बंगाली भाषा आणि साहित्य, त्यातही विशेषतः शरत्साहित्य, याविषयी असलेली त्यांच्या मनाची ओढ पाहिली की, शरत्साहित्याचा अनुवाद करण्यासाठी ते आदर्श अनुवादक होते ही गोष्ट कोणीही मान्य करील. पण त्यांचे अनुवाद वाचताना हे सामर्थ्य यावे तसे प्रत्येकाला येत नाही. इथे त्यांची शैली खूप बोजड आणि कृत्रिम झाल्याचे दाखले जागोजागी मिळतात. रचना, व्याकरण आणि शब्दसंपत्ति या तीनही बाबतीत खूपच दोष राहिले आहेत. त्यांच्या भाषांतराचे परिष्करण त्यांनी कधीच केलेले दिसत नाही. अधिक स्वातंत्र्य न घेता मुळाबरहुकूम रहाण्याचा मामाचा प्रयत्न म्हणजे योग्य दिशेने टाकलेले पाऊल होते यात शंका नाही. मामांनी एक गोष्ट निश्चितपणे चांगली केली. शरत्साहित्याचा विस्तार, त्यातले गूतागूतीचे अद्भुत जग, मानवी मनाचा तळठाड पाहण्याचे त्यांचे कौशल्य यांच्याशी त्यांनी मराठी वाचकांची ओळख करून दिली. पण अनुवादाचे काम अधिक चोखंदळपणाने होते तर बरे.

याचा अर्थ असा नव्हे की, शरदबाबूंच्या कादंबऱ्यांची योग्य ती चहा झाली नाही. उलट आश्चर्याची गोष्ट म्हणजे इतक्या सर्व अडचणी असूनही त्यांच्या साहित्याचे प्रचंड प्रमाणावर स्वागत केले गेले. कादंबऱ्यांच्या वाचकांत जशी श्रीकांत अजूनही लोकप्रिय आहे तशाच देवदास, परिणीता या कादंबऱ्याही लोकप्रिय आहेत. चित्रपटांनी हे प्रेम अधिकच दृढ केले आहे. शरच्चंद्राकडे एक परकीय साहित्यिक म्हणून कधीच पाहिले गेले नाही. तरीही वाचक वर्गाने त्याचे स्वागत पुरेसे केले असे म्हणता येत नाही.

ज्या काळात नाट्यपूर्ण आणि अतिमानवी घटनांनी भरलेल्या कादंबऱ्या वाचण्यासाठी मराठी वाचक अतिशय उत्सुक होता त्या काळात बंकिमचंद्र, प्रभातकुमार मुखोपाध्याय यांचे चांगले स्वागत झाले. परंतु ज्यांनी अशा कादंबऱ्यांचे अनुवाद सातत्याने प्रकाशित केले त्यांनीही कलात्मक व सांस्कृतिक मूल्यांमध्ये फारसा रस घेतला नाही. नियमितपणे आकर्षक कादंबऱ्या पुरवून वाचकांचे समाधान कसे करता येईल याचाच त्यांनी विचार केला. मामा घरेकरांनी या क्षेत्रात पाऊल टाकल्याबरोबर सारे चित्र बदलते, बदलायला हवे. शरदबाबूंच्या थळ करणाऱ्या आणि मन हलविणाऱ्या कथांच्या विलक्षण सुष्टीत आपले बोट धरून ते आपल्याला घेऊन जातात. शरच्चंद्रांच्या कादंबऱ्यांचा मामांनी सातत्याने आणि व्यापक प्रमाणावर परिचय करून दिला. वास्तविक त्यामुळे मराठी कादंबरीला आशय आणि उद्दिष्टांच्या दृष्टीने नवा जोम मिळायला हवा होता. दुर्दैवाने मराठी कादंबरीच्या बाबतीत हे जितक्या प्रमाणात घडायला हवे होते तितक्या प्रमाणात घडले नाही.

एखाद्या लेखकाच्या किती कादंबऱ्यांची भाषांतरे झाली आणि वाचकांनी त्यांचे कितपत स्वागत केले एवढ्यावरूनच लेखकाच्या एकूण प्रभावाचे मोजमाप घेता येत नाही. तर त्याने लेखनशैलीवर केलेला परिणाम, कादंबरीच्या घाटामध्ये घडविलेले परिवर्तन, रचना-कौशल्य, कथावस्तु, भाषेचा उपयोग आणि या सर्वांपेक्षाही जीवनाबद्दलचा त्याचा दृष्टिकोन, यावरून हे मोजमाप घेणे शक्य आहे. या दृष्टीने पहाता आपल्या पदरी निराशा येते. अर्थात् थोड्याबहुत प्रमाणात इथेथिथे शरदबाबूंच्या शैलीचे पडसाद उमटलेले दिसतात. काहींनी त्यांची भाषाविवशता उचलली पण शरदबाबूंना असणारी मानवी रागाद्वेषांची सखोल जाणीव त्यांच्या ठिकाणी दिसत नाही. काहींनी आत्मचरित्र आणि कादंबरी यांची सांगड घालण्याचे त्यांचे कसब आत्मसात केले. बहुधा रमा किंवा राजलक्ष्मी सारख्या त्यांच्या चित्रांवरून प्रेरणा घेऊन काहींनी देवता स्वरूपात स्त्रियांची चित्रे रंगविली. तर काहींनी विशिष्ट प्रदेशांच्या मर्यादा स्वतःभोवती घालून घेऊन कथा लिहिल्या. परंतु शरच्चंद्रांचे जीवनावरील भाष्य ग्रहण करून आणि पूर्णपणे सामावून घेऊन त्याला अधिक संपन्नता आणि नवजीवन प्राप्त करून देणे हे मात्र मराठी कादंबरीच्या क्षेत्रात घडलेले नाही.

एक भटक्या आणि अश्रद्ध, एक सुधारक आणि देशप्रेमी, एक वस्ताद गोष्टी सांगणारा आणि वाचकांशी मजेत इकडच्या तिकडच्या गप्पा भारणारा—अशा कितीतरी धाग्यांनी शरदबाबूंच्या थोरवीचे वस्त्र विणले आहे. त्यांचे साहित्यविश्व तरी किती विलक्षण आत्मकेंद्रित आणि तरीही अमर्याद, त्यांची पात्रसृष्टि म्हणजे एक नक्षत्रमंडळ. आणि त्यांच्या कथांतील भावनांचे तांडव विविधरंगी आणि

चक्ति करणारे. मात्र त्यांचे खरे सामर्थ्य होते ते त्यांच्या कृतीत स्पंदन पावणाऱ्या आणि सर्वत्र भरून राहिलेल्या चैतन्यात. म्हणून तर या साहित्यातून जाणवणारे शरच्चंद्राचे व्यक्तित्व म्हणजे एका थोर, सहृदय माणसाचे व्यक्तित्व आहे. पापपुण्याचे हिशेब न मांडता माणूस समजून घेण्याच्या वृत्तीतूनच केवटीतरी क्षमाशीलता त्यांच्या ठायी प्रतीत होते.

अगदी अलिकडेच शरदबाबांच्या जीवनावर आधारित असलेली जीवन स्वप्न' ही मराठी कादंबरी डॉ० सुमती क्षेत्रमाळे यांनी लिहिली. शरच्चंद्रावरील टीकांलेखनातूनही ह्या महान लेखकाने आपली मने किती काबीज केली आहेत हे सिद्ध होते. उणीव आहे ती शरच्चंद्रांच्या त्या चैतन्याच्या निकोप आणि जोमदार प्रभावाची. असा प्रभाव पडता तर लेखकांचे क्षितिज किती रुंदावले असते आणि त्याबरोबरच सक्षो अतर्मुखतेची शक्ती त्यांना प्राप्त झाली असती. शरदबाबांचा प्रभाव काही महत्वाच्या मराठी लेखकांवर पडला हे स्पष्ट आहे त्यांच्या जादूचा असर ममा वरेरकरावर तर पूर्वीच झाला होता. त्याशिवाय अरविंद गोखले, पु० भा. भावे, गंगाधर गाडगीळ या युद्धोत्तर काळातील प्रथितयश लघुकथा-लेखकांवर शरच्चंद्रांचे ऋण आहे अर्थात हे ऋण सर्वांवर सारखे नाही. गो. नी. दांडेकर आणि श्री. ना. पेडसे या मराठीतील दोन प्रसिद्ध कादंबरीकारांवरही शरदबाबांचा मोठा प्रभाव आहे, तोही एकस्वरूप नाही. 'कुणा एकाची भ्रम-णगाथा आणि स्मरण गाथा' या दांडेकरांच्या कादंबऱ्या शरदबाबांच्याच शैलीने लिहिल्या गेल्या आहेत. श्री० ना. पेडस्यावर त्यांच्या बहुरंगी वास्तववादाचा खूपच प्रभाव आहे. शरच्चंद्र मुक्तिबोध यांच्या दीर्घ उपन्यासातूनही शरत्साहित्यातील प्रवृत्ती प्रतिबिंबित झाल्या आहेत शरदबाबांच्या कादंबऱ्यांच्या आधारे त्यांचे जीवन सुमति क्षेत्रमाळ यांनी 'जीवनस्वप्न' मध्ये रगविले या कादंबरीचा दर्जा विवाद्य आहे, परन्तु लेखिकेला शरत्साहित्याने पूर्ण क्षपाटून टाकले आहे ही गोष्ट आपल्या मनावर ठसल्याशिवाय रहात नाही. सरोजिनी वेंचानी शेषप्रश्न वर लिहिलेला मार्मिक लेख शरदबाबांनी सवेदनाशील मने कशी काबीज केली आहेत याची साक्ष देतो. या यादीत आणखी ही भर घालता येईल. परन्तु त्यामुळे मुख्य मुद्दा काही बदलत नाही—शरच्चंद्रांचा प्रभाव व्यापक प्रमाणावर आणि सर्व सामर्थ्यानिशी पडलेला नाही तसा पडता तर मराठी साहित्यात एक वेगळीच शाखा निर्माण झाली असती.

महाराष्ट्रीय ममाच्या घडणीच्या वेगळेपणातच कदाचित याचे कारण सापडेल. बंगाली स्वभाव आणि महाराष्ट्रीय स्वभाव म्हणून काही असतात आणि त्यांची तुलना करता येते असे मांडण्यात कदाचित आपण ब्रूकही करीत असू परन्तु मराठी मन भावनिक परिस्थितीचा विचार अगदी निराळ्या प्रकाराने करते हे मात्र खरे अर्थात याच्या सर्व कारणांची यादी करणे शक्य नाही. तरी पण महाराष्ट्रातील भूगोल आणि इतिहास सामाजिक आणि आर्थिक परिस्थिती कलात्मक आणि शैक्षणिक वारसा यांनीच मराठी मनाला हे वेगळे वळण लावले आहे. बंगाल आणि महाराष्ट्रातील वैचारिकता, राजकारण अध्यात्म यांमध्ये बराच सुसवाद आहे. परन्तु साहित्यातून भावनांचे प्रकटीकरण करण्याच्या बाबतीत मात्र दोहोचे फारसे जमत नाही असे दिसते. खरे म्हणजे मराठी वाचक बुद्धिवाद आणि तर्ककर्कशता यांना जरा जास्तच मानतो भावसत्याच्या प्रभावाखाली आपले मन तो सहसा राहू देत नाही. पाप-पुण्य, न्याय-अन्याय असल्या निवाडा देणाऱ्या धूर्ताना घ्यायला त्याला आवडत असल्यामुळे क्षमेच्या स्निग्ध, शीतल प्रकाशात जीवनाचे स्वरूप न्याहाळणे त्याला फारसे जमत नाही. असो हे विवेचन जरा जास्तच दोबळ आणि बालबोध झाले असे म्हणता येईल

शरदबाबांच्या जन्मशताब्दीच्या निमित्ताने आपण त्यांच्या साहित्यामध्ये अधिक रस घेऊ शकू अशी आशा करायला काहीच हरकत नाही. शरत्साहित्यात केवटी तरी भावश्रीमती आहे. तिच्यामुळे जादा बुद्धिवादाचा उत्तम निरास होतो. आणि मुख्य म्हणजे मनुष्यजीवनाच्या रहस्यमय विश्वावर शरत्साहित्य किती अनपेक्षितपणे प्रकाश टाकते।

# Saratchandra's influence on the Marathi fiction

Vasant Bapat

The first Marathi novel *Yamunā Paryāṇa* was published in 1857, seven years before the first Bengali novel *Durgēśnandīnī* saw the light of the day. Soon however the Bengali novel overtook the Marathi, or so it seems, from the spate of translations and adaptations of Bengali novels into Marathi. The first translation of *Ānanda Maṭh* in 1898 opened the floodgate, and in the next twenty five years followed Marathi translations of novels penned by Jogendranath Chattopadhyay, Taraknath Gangopadhyay, Bankimchandra, Chandiraman Sen and later by Rabindranath and Saratchandra. This phenomenon appears more astounding if we consider the fact that the Marathi novel itself was making rapid and noteworthy progress in those times. Hari Narayan Apte was very much on the scene, and others on the horizon were already moving towards their zenith. And yet the lure of the Bengali novel, especially the works of Bankimchandra, was irresistible. Kashinath Raghunath Mitra who edited *Manoranjan*, a literary magazine, was himself an earnest translator of Bengali fiction into Marathi. So were others like Vitthal Sectaram Gurjar and Vasudeo Govind Apte. A number of publishing houses thrived on their series of translations—mostly from English and Bengali. With Scott and Dumas Mrs. Henry Wood and Corelli, Jane Austen and George Eliot, we find Jogendranath Chattopadhyay, Bankimchandra, Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyay, Rameshchandra Datta, and Rabindranath Tagore constantly inspiring enthusiastic translators to translate or adapt their works into Marathi. A helpful survey shows that between 1874 and 1920, the figures of novels translated from other languages into Marathi are : Tamil-1, Urdu-2 ; Gujarati-5 ; Hindi-13 ; Bengali-59 ; English-98. This analysis is indeed significant. It shows that Bengali novels enjoyed a popularity only next to English. These figures relate to novels that are admittedly translated or adapted. But all of us know that much borrowing goes unnoticed and that all borrowers do not acknowledge their debts. We have also to account for diffusion and subtle imbibing of the theme and spirit of great novelists. Considering all these factors and considering that there arose many significant indigenous novelists in this period, the influence of the Bengali Novel on the Marathi is stupendous.

If on this background we attempt to gauge and evaluate Saratchandra's influence, we are surprised to find that he attracted attention rather late. It is true that his novel *Dattā*



was first translated as *Bijayā* in 1920 ; but either because of the poor quality of translation, or because of the insensitivity of the readers, or because of both, Saratchandra then just did not click. It was only after his death that Saratchandra ultimately found a high place of honour in the minds of the Marathi readers. P. S. Desai, P. B. Kulkarni, S. B. Shastri, and the indomitable Mama Varerkar—himself a prolific writer—translated Saratchandra's works in a spirit of devotion and unflinching loyalty. Mama Varerkar especially deserves the highest praise for the colossal effort he put in to take Saratchandra to every Marathi household. The credit for introducing the earlier Bengali novelists goes to a number of writers like Kashinath R. Mitra, Vitthal Seetaram Gurjar, and Vasudeo Govind Apte, but specially to Apte ; for, he translated entire Bankimchandra with almost a missionary zeal. Varerkar, too, displayed the same when it came to translating Saratchandra. He translated *Baradidi*, *Birāj Bau*, *Pariṇītā*, *Paṇḍit Maśāi*, *Pallī-Samāj*, *Chandranāth*, *Arakṣaṇiyā*, *Śrikānta*, *Dēbdās*, *Niṣkṛti*, *Charitrahin*, *Gṛhadāha*—almost all Saratchandra's works. But this is not all. His real strength lay not in the volume of his translations, or their quality, but in his deep understanding of what Saratchandra stood for.

Most of Saratchandra's translations in Marathi were published in the forties, not a very propitious time for a proper reception. The Second World War and its aftermath had thrown up challenges hitherto unknown, and trends in art and literature had undergone a metamorphosis. The geopolitical situation had been considerably altered and there was a serious setback to the optimist's philosophy about the destiny of Man. Nearer home, freedom had arrived amidst wailing and moaning. War had upset the quietude of life, both rural and urban. Indeed, in an atmosphere of fear and instability, when the contours of the social and individual life patterns were continuously changing, it was difficult to receive an author like Saratchandra weaving his stories around life slow in movement, stories full of situations relevant to a bygone past and dealing with the eternal mysteries of love. It is true that Saratchandra through his age-bound stories depicts eternal problems of human relationships ; but this fact does not become obvious to a casual reader who picks up his reading material rather sporadically. One might be occasionally moved while reading a Saratchandra classic ; but one has to be a Sarat-addict to realise fully the depth of his creative genius, to understand the perennial spirituality flowing like an undercurrent beneath the apparent Godlessness, to comprehend the vast canvas on which he draws with consummate skill his hundreds of portraits and to assimilate the philosophy of life that this truant tramp has to offer. One could never hope to swallow Saratchandra in a hurried gulp ; one has to sip him in a sedate fashion allowing every sip to gradually possess one's soul. And the holocaust of the Second War precisely made it impossible for us to take him in with this right attitude.

Saratchandra makes you aware of the inner contradictions and anomalies of the rural life in Bengal. He paints a crumbling decadent society ridden with a feudal economy and a cruel caste system. Now one could use these phrases in a general way to describe any provincial scene in India ; but every discerning observer knows that there are gross differences in the life patterns of the different parts of India. Thus, the Zemindar of Bengal and the landlord of Maharashtra are not the same. The entire structure of land holdings is different, and so are the consequent ways of life. Even the caste hierarchies and consequent codes of conduct are different. Naturally, there is a vast difference between the problems of rural Bengal and those of Maharashtra. Saratchandra's novels, therefore, appear a little outlandish to the Marathi reader. It is true that Saratchandra's attitude is neither that of an avowed realist, nor that of a moony romantic. He combines the best of both the worlds. One cannot call his novels provincial. Like Hardy, he pinpoints your attention on a particular region only to make you conscious of its universality. Still, if the writer represents a milieu different from that of the reader, and

does not use it merely as a backdrop but as the very clay with which to create his magic world, the reader is bound to find it a little difficult to keep himself in tune with the writer. This does happen when a Marathi reader reads Saratchandra.

Then there is yet another barrier : defective translations. Now, Mama Varerkar was eminently suited to undertake the work of bringing entire Saratchandra into Marathi. He is justly known for the simplicity and directness of his Marathi prose. These qualities are the outcome of his attitudes towards society and literature. His love for the common man, his craving for depicting the life of the lower strata, his dislike for both pseudo-romanticism and pedantry, and his love for the Bengali language and literature in general and for Saratchandra in particular, mark him out as an ideal mediator. The novels he translated, however, reveal the chinks in his armour. Here his style becomes intermittently clumsy or awkward. There are many instances of involved constructions, unsound grammar and contrived vocabulary. Perhaps the translator never had a second look at his translations. There is, however, one good point about them ; Varerkar does not paraphrase or adapt Saratchandra, he translates him. The translations are no metaphrase ; but the translator has probably made a serious attempt to closely follow the original.

All this does not mean that Saratchandra has not been appreciated in Maharashtra. On the contrary, it is amazing that breaking all these barriers Saratchandra has been extremely well-received. *Śrikānta* is still very popular with the readers of fiction and so are many other novels like *Dēbdās*, or *Parīṇitā*. Films have added to Saratchandra's popularity with the art-loving people. In one sense, Saratchandra is not looked upon as an outsider. And yet one is not satisfied with this limited acceptance on the part of Marathi people.

Bankimchandra or Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyay were well received in an age when people were eager to read absorbing stories full of dramatic events and supernatural happenings. In fact, even those who ardently published translations of Bengali novels were not so much interested in artistic merits or cultural enrichment. They were interested in winning the favours of their reading public through a fairly regular supply of interesting fiction. With Mama Varerkar stepping forth, the whole picture changes or ought to change. He wanted us to enter the complex world of Saratchandra, so awe-inspiring and so moving. His protracted and broad spectrum administering Saratchandra should have given a new content and a new dimension to the Marathi fiction. Unfortunately, this did not happen, at least not in the measure it should have happened.

The influence of a great writer is not to be measured merely by the number of his works translated and the reception these translations had ; it is to be measured in its diffused form, the way it affected the style of writers, the structure or format of the novel, the use of language, the themes, and above all the attitude towards life. It is here that we almost draw a blank. Of course there are faint echoes of Saratchandra here and there. Some have picked up his sentimentality to the utter exclusion of his deep understanding of love and hate ; some have imitated his art of combining autobiography with fiction. Some have deified the Woman, perhaps being inspired by portrayals of *Ramā* or *Rājīlakṣmī*. Yet others have learnt to circumscribe their stories within a locale or a region. But nowhere do we find in Marathi, Saratchandra's philosophy of life thoroughly assimilated, originally imbibed, and accepted with a desire to enliven and enrich it.

The tramp and the nonconformist, the reformer and the patriot, the master story-teller and the delightful Rambler have all combined to make Saratchandra an all time Great. His egocentric universe is an expanding universe, with an enchanting portrait-galaxy and bewildering hues of conflicting emotions. But his real strength lies in the life that pulsates and permeates throughout his works and gives us a glimpse into his compassionate heart, for whom to understand was to forgive.

A novel called *Jivan-Swapna* has been recently brought out in Marathi. Written by Dr. Sumati Kshetramade, it deals with the life of Saratchandra. Critical writing also has intermittently proved our constant preoccupation with this great writer. What is missing is a vigorous and healthy diffusion of the Saratchandra spirit that should widen the ken of writers and at the same time give them the strength to probe deep within themselves.

Of course, Saratchandra's influence is noticeable in the works of some important Marathi writers. Varerkar himself entered his magic spell long back. Then we have Arvind Gokhale, P. B. Bhawe and Gangadhar Gadgil, all very prominent shortstory writers of the post-War Marathi literature, who are indebted to Saratchandra, though not in an identical manner. G. N. Dandekar and S. N. Pendse, two prominent novelists have certainly been swayed by Saratchandra, again not identically. Dandekar's *Kōnyā Kachi Bhraman-Gāthā* and then *Smaran-Gāthā* are most proximate to Saratchandra's style while in Pendse you find his colourful realism reflected. Then we have Saratchandra Muktiboth, the author of a trilogy, who has imbibed a good deal from Saratchandra. Sumati Kshetramade has written *Jivan-Swapna*, a novel on Saratchandra's life reconstructing it with the help of his novels. One may question its class, but one is bound to be impressed by the fact that for the author Saratchandra's literature has been a magnificent obsession. Sarojini Vaidya's fine reflections on *Śēṣ Prasna* is a scintillating illustration of how Saratchandra ought to influence sensitive minds. Well, one may add a few more names to this list ; but that will not alter the main contention that the diffusion of his influence is not as widespread as it should have been, nor is it so powerfully penetrating as to set up a new school.

Perhaps the reason is to be found deep down in the mental makeup of the Maharashtrians. It will be a folly to generalise and compare the Bengali character and the Maharashtrian character. But it does occur that the Marathi mind responds in a different way to emotional situations. It is not easy to enumerate the causes behind this, but may be the history and geography of Maharashtra, its socio-economic conditions, literary and academic traditions have moulded the Maharashtrian mind in a different way. There seems to be a meaningful dialogue between Bengal and Maharashtra in the fields of thought, philosophy and politics ; but it is a different story when we come to the field of expressing emotions. The Marathi reader is much used to the overtones of intellectualism and reasoning. He is a little averse to the power of intuitive approach to truth. A victim of the habit of sitting upon judgement, he cannot much relish the idea of understanding life through the medium of compassion. Perhaps this is overgeneralising and oversimplifying the issue. Now that the birth centenary of Saratchandra is being celebrated, it is to be hoped that soon we shall find a sustained interest in Saratchandra's great art, so rich in its emotional aspect, doing away with unwarranted intellectuality, and ever so full of unsuspected possibilities of understanding the mysterious universe of Man.

# शरच्चंद्रांच्या प्रमुख नायिका

## सुमति क्षेत्रमाडे

बालविधवा—विशेषतः पदस्खलित झालेल्या किंबहुना समाजाने पदस्खलित केलेल्या, चरित्रहीन लेखल्या गेलेल्या मध्यम वर्गीय पतित स्त्रियांची सत्य चित्रणे हे शरच्चंद्रांच्या साहित्याचे वैशिष्ट्य आहे. त्यांच्या समग्र साहित्याचे ते केन्द्रस्थान आहे. आणि त्यांच्या श्रेष्ठ प्रतिभेचा तो मानबिंदू आहे.

अशा पतित स्त्रियांची मूक दुःखे, अमानुष रूढींमुळे होणारा त्यांच्या मनाचा कोळमारा, त्यांच्या सूक्ष्म भावभावना, त्यांच्या व्यथावेदना, त्यांचे मानसिक संघर्ष याची सत्य चित्रणे साकार करण्यात त्यांनी आपली प्रतिभा, आपली कला आणि आपली अनुभवसमृद्धि ओतली आहे. इतकी बोलकी चित्रणे भारतीय वाङ्मयात अभावानेच सापडतील.

शरदबाबूच्या भावूक आणि कनवाळू मनाचे दुःख त्यांच्या सजाग संवेदनाशील अंतःकरणाच्या वेदना, त्यांची तरल कल्पनाशक्ति, त्यांचे सूक्ष्म, सखोल आणि अचूक निरीक्षण, सामाजिक अन्यायाची चीड इत्यादि त्यांच्या प्रकृतीची वैशिष्ट्ये त्यांच्या स्त्रीचित्रणातून प्रकर्षाने दिसून येतात.

त्यांनी अनेक वेळा म्हटले आहे 'जे मी प्रत्यक्ष पाहिले नाही अनुभवले नाही असा अंकही शब्द मी लिहिला नाही.' खरे आहे ते। कारण त्यांचे अधपासून इतिपर्यंतचे जीवन हे त्याच प्रत्यंतर आहे.

शरदबाबूचा रगूनमधला साडेतेरा वर्षांचा काल सोडला तर त्यांचे संपूर्ण जीवन खेड्यात गेलं. तिथे मध्यम वर्गीय कुटुंबात बहत्क घरांत जेव्हाही बालविधवा असे. आपल्या नारीर मूल्य मध्ये त्यांनी म्हटले आहे की कुटुंबात विधवेची किंमत शून्य असते. अशा शून्यवत विधवाना कुटुंबात आणि समाजात मिळणारी अमानुष वागणूक, त्यांचे गुदमरलेले जीवन ते पाहात होत, पतिताच्या करुण कहाण्या ते ऐकत होते. अनेक कथा त्यांनी प्रत्यक्ष पाहिल्या होत्या.

स्त्रीजातीचे मूक दुःख त्यांनी आपल्या धरातच पाहिले होते, अनुभूत केले होते त्यांच्या आईने मृत्युशय्येवरून काढलेले उदगार—

“न्याहा, स्त्री ही आपल्या बरोबर दुःख घेऊनच जन्माला येते ... ..”

आईचे हे अखेरचे शब्द त्यांच्या शोकाकुल कोमल हृदयात कायमचे घर करून बसले. आईचे उभे जीवन त्यांच्या नित्य नजरेसमोर येत असे. तिची असीम सहनशक्ति, तिची सेवावृत्ति, तिचा त्याग, तिचा कठोर संयम, दारिद्र्यातही जागरूक असलेले तिचे दातृत्व—भारतीय संस्कृतीच्या या अतुट धाग्यांनी त्यांच्या मनाला कायमचे वेदून टाकले होते. भारतीय संस्कृतीच्या या पवित्र धारांचा झरा शरदबाबूच्या कनवाळू अंतःकरणात कायमचा उमटला होता.

शरदबाबूची स्त्रीचित्रणे वाचताना जेक गोष्ट प्रामुख्याने नजरेत भरते. ती म्हणजे त्यांच्या नायिकांचे—उपनायिकांचे जीवनप्रवाह कथानुरूप प्राप्त परिस्थितीत वेगवेगळ्या वळणानी जात असले तरी या वरील पवित्र धारा त्यांच्या जीवन प्रवाहात मिसळून शेवटपर्यंत अविरत वाहाताना दिसतात. जेवढेच नव्हे तर कथानकाच्या शेवटी तर असे वाटत राहाते की या गंगाधारा त्यांच्या जीवनाच्या प्रमाथी प्रवाहाच्या दुतर्फे किनारा बनल्या आहेत. उदा. अचल (गृहदाह), सावित्री, किरणमयी (चरित्रहीन), भारती (पथेरदाबी), राजलक्ष्मी (श्रीकान्त).

स्त्रीपुरुष प्रेम हें शरदबाबूच्या अधिकांश कथाकादंबऱ्यांचें मूळ आहे. स्त्रीच्या हृदयात उद्भवलेले तारुण्यसुलभ प्रेम आणि सामाजिक बंधने यांच्यातला संघर्ष, स्त्रीच्या नैसर्गिक भावभावना आणि पारंपरिक संस्कार यांच्यातले मानसिक द्वंद्व त्यांच्या कादंबऱ्यात प्रामुख्याने दिसून येतात. या मानसिक संघर्षाला प्रसंगी झंझावाताचे रूप येते त्यांचा मनोसागर खवळतो, आणि बंडखोर विचारांच्या प्रचंड लाटा उसळतात. पण हे संघर्ष विशिष्ट मर्यादितपलीकडे जात नाहीत. आपल्या असफल प्रीतीत आत्मसमाधान मिळविण्याची शक्ति (राजलक्ष्मी), आपल्या वासनामय प्रेमाला आत्मिक प्रेमात परिणत करण्याचे सामर्थ्य (सावित्री)—त्यांच्यात आहे

कारण शरदबाबूच्या कथा नायिकांच्या प्रीतीची रीत आगळी तर आहेच, पण या प्रेमाची जातहि वेगळी आहे. हें प्रेम कामुक नाही या प्रेमाचे मूळ फार खोल आहे. स्त्रीच्या—कुठच्याहि स्त्रीच्या प्रेमाचा उगम मातृप्रेमात होतो. वात्सल्य हा स्त्रीचा सहजभाव आहे. तिच्या प्रेमाचे हें मूळ आहे. यौवनात अंकुरित झालेले नाजूक भाव—अनुरागाच्या छटा जेव्हा वात्सल्याच्या सेवा आणि त्याग या परिणत रूपात जेकरूप होऊन जातात तेव्हा त्या प्रीतीला जेक वेगळेच सामर्थ्य प्राप्त होते. स्त्रीचे हें असे प्रेम ही तिची महान शक्ति आहे. हे प्रेम वुसऱ्याच्या स्वभावाचे परिवर्तन घडवून आणते. दुष्टाला सुष्ट करते. उदा 'बोडशी—जीवानंद', 'सावित्री-सतीश', प्रसंगा यमाच्या पाशातून खेचून परत आणण्याचें सामर्थ्यहि याच प्रेमात असते. उदा, 'अचल-महिम' सुरेशहि जेव्हा भूगाच्या तापाने फणफणला, तेव्हा अचल त्याच्याकडे धावते. या माणसाने आपणाला पळवून नेले, आपलें जीवन बरबाद केले असा पुसटसामुद्रा विचार मनात न आणता, आणि स्वतांच्या जीवाची पर्वा न करता ती त्याची सेवा करते, त्याच्या आयुष्याची दोरी तुटली होती त्याला तिचा इलाज नाही. पण तिचे सामर्थ्य तेकडे पडते असे म्हणता येणार नाही, या बाबतीतले 'राजलक्ष्मी' चें सामर्थ्य अतुलनीय आहे.

शरदबाबूना स्त्रीमनाच्या भावभावनाचे किती सखोल ज्ञान होते आणि त्यांचे निरीक्षण किती सूक्ष्म होते हें पाहतांना मन स्तिमित होऊन जाते त्यांच्या 'माधवी', 'चंद्रमुखी', 'अचल', 'सावित्री' 'विजया', 'भारती', आणि 'राजलक्ष्मी' इत्यादि नायिकांचे प्रेम हें या जातीचे आहे.

या नायिकांच्या अनुरागाला वात्सल्याने सुरवात होते. वात्सल्यातून अनुरागाचा अरुणोदय केव्हा कसा होतो हें त्यांचे त्यांनाच कळत नाही. जेव्हा कळून येते तेव्हा मग स्वाभाविकच प्रेम विरुद्ध समाज बंधने, कडी इत्यादि संघर्षाला सुरवात होते.

शरदबाबूनी सुरवातीला ज्या कादंबऱ्या लिहिल्या त्यात 'बडदिदि' ची नायिका 'माधवी' ही त्यांची प्रातिनिधिक नायिका म्हणता येईल 'माधवी' ची कथा ही जेका बालविधवेच्या असफल प्रीतीची जेक सरळ करुण कथा आहे.

सुरेन्द्र जेक हुशार पदवीधर, सधन जमींदाराचा तरुण मुलगा असतो. उच्च शिक्षणासाठी परदेशी जायला सावत्र आई विरोध करते म्हणून बिबून घराबाहेर पडतो. कलकत्त्याला येतो. नोकरीसाठी भटकतो, योगायोगाने माधवीच्या विधुर जमीनदार पित्याचा परिचय होतो. त्यांच्या दोनच मुली. मोठी बालविधवा माधवी आणि धाकटी प्रमिला. प्रमिलेसाठी शिक्षक म्हणून त्याची नेमणूक होते. तो कुलजील घरचा, बुद्धिमान पण सामान्य परिस्थितीतला असावा अशी सगळ्यांची समजूत होते. तो स्वतांच्या बाबतीत अगदी निष्काळजी असतो. त्याची बालसदृश आणि निष्कपट वृत्ति पाहून स्वाभाविकच माधवीला त्याच्याविषयी सहानुभूति वाटते. तिच्यातलें नैसर्गिक सुप्त मातृप्रेम जागृत होते, वात्सल्य झिरपते. ती त्याची काळजी घेते, त्याला जपते. या मातृप्रेमात हलके हलके नाजूक भाव केव्हा कसे विमाणे झाले हे तिला कळलेहि नाही, पण घरांतल्या नेकरा चाकरांच्या काकदृष्टीला ते दिसत असते. आपआपसात त्यांची कुजबूजहि चालते.

फुलाचा सुगंध त्याला स्वताला कुठें कळतो ? पण तिने आपल्या मैत्रीणीला लिहिलेल्या पत्रांत सुरेनविषयी जें लिहिले होते त्या नाजूक शब्दांना सुगंध येत असतो. मैत्रीण पत्रोतरी तिला सावधगिरीची सूचना देते, "तू विधवा आहेस हें लक्षात ठेव."

माधवी भयचकित होते. विधवेला परपुरुषावर प्रेम करण्याचा अधिकार नाही, असे प्रेम निषिद्ध आहे, हे ती जागत असते. ती सावध होते. त्याला विसरण्यासाठी त्याच्यावर जडलला जीव मागे खेचून घेण्यासाठी ती काशीला निघून जाते. काही कालानंतर प्रमिलेच्या परत येण्याच्या आग्रहाच्या पत्रामुळे माधवी परत येते. अर्थात ते पत्र सुरेनच्या सांगण्यावरून प्रमिलाने लिहिलेले असते.

ती परत येताच सुरेन्द्र आनंदित होता. आणि आपणाला तिची किती उणीव भासली हे सांगण्यासाठी तो भावनेच्या भरात अंज-दम अंतर्गृहात जातो. परपुरुषाने अंत पुरात जाणे परंपर्याच्या विरुद्ध असत. त्याला अचानक सभोर पाहताच ती अस्वस्थ होते. संयमाची मजबूत भिंत आपल्या हृदयाभोवती बांधून ती काशीहून परतलेली असते. त्याला भावविषय अवस्थेत सन्मुख पाहताच त्या भिंतीचा अंक दगड दासकून पडतो. दुसरा दासकून पडण्यापूर्वीच बहिणीची शिकवणी बंद करून ती त्याला तडफाफडकी रजा देते.

तो उपाशी पोटी बाहेर पडतो. शुधाशमनार्थ भटकत असता त्याला अपघात होतो. बेशुद्धावस्थेत त्याला हॉस्पिटलमध्ये नेले जाते. तो शुद्धीवर आल्यावर, त्याचा ठावठिकाणा मिळवून त्याच्या घरी व माधवीच्या घरी कळविले जाते. माधवीचे वडील त्याला पाहायला हॉस्पिटलमध्ये जातात तेव्हा तिलाहि बरोबर चलय्याचा त आग्रह करतात. पण ती जाण्याचे टाळते कारण संयमाची भिंत अधिक दासळायला नको. हॉस्पिटलमध्ये त्यांना कळत की सुरेन गरीब नसून अक सधन जमीनदार पत्र आहे. ही गोष्ट ते माधवीला सांगतात. ती अंकून घेते आणि स्तब्धपणे निघून जाते. सुरेन्द्र बरा होऊन आपल्या गावी जातो.

मध्यतरी पाच वर्षे जातात. भाग्यचक्र फिरते. सुरेनचे लग्न झालेले आहे. पण माधवीला तो विसरू शकत नाही. पिण्याची जमीनदारी त्याच्या हाती आलेली आहे. इतके माधवीचे वडील मृत्युवश होतात. ती आपल्या स्वर्गीय पतीच्या घरात राहायला जाते. योगायोग असा की ज्या गावी त घर आहे ते गाव सुरेनच्या जमीनदारीत येते. त्याच्या नोकराकडून ती अंक रयत म्हणून तिचा छळ होतो. त्या रयत स्त्रीचे 'माधवी' हे नाव कानी पडताच त्याची पूर्वस्मृति जागृत होते. तो तसाच घोळ्यावरून दौडत त्या गावी तिच्या घरी जातो. पण तत्पूर्वीच ती निघून गेलेली असत. तिच्या शोधार्थ तो भटकतो. अतिश्रमाने थकतो. तेवढ्यात ती नावेतून चाललेली दिसते. तो नाव पकडतो. पण अतिश्रमामुळे मूच्छा येऊन तो पडतो आणि तिच्या माडीवर त्याचा मृत्यु होतो. माधवीचे असफल प्रेम संयमाच्या भिंतीतच समाधिस्थ होते. 'बडिदिदि' ही अंक असफल मुग्ध प्रीतीची काव्यमय तरुण कथा आहे.

पार्वती—ही 'देवदास' ची नायिका. तिचे चित्रण मोठे विलक्षण आहे. पार्वती बालविधवा नाही. पण दोघाचे प्रेम असफल होते त वर्गभेदामुळे. दोघाचे कुलशील अंक आहे, पण ती भाड्याच्या घरात राहाणारी अंक सामान्य भरची मुलगी. तो सधन जमीनदार पुत्र दोघे शेजारी राहाणारी लहानपणी अकाच शाळेत शिकलेली आहेत. वर्गभेदामुळे त्याच्या घळून लग्नाला विरोध होतो. तिच लग्न अंका श्रीमंत बीजवराबरोबर होण्याच्या वाटाघाटी चालू असतात. देवदास कलकत्त्याहून सुटीत घरी येतो तेव्हा त्याला ते कळते. दिव्यद होतो. आणि ती ? ती कुलीन कन्या मर्यादशील असूनहि तिचे निस्सीम प्रेम तिला धाडसी बनवते. शेवटचा निकराचा प्रयत्न करण्यासाठी ती अंन मध्यरात्री त्याच्या हवेलीत शिरते. देवडीवरचा दरवान अंगरी चौकात झोपलेला नोकर—साच्याना सरळ ओलाडून ती त्याच्या खोलीत शिरते. त्यावेळी त्या दोघात जा सवाद होतो, त्यात तिचे असामान्य धैर्य, तिची अचल निष्ठा, लोकनिंदेला तोंड देण्याची तिची तयारी, त्याला गृहत्याग करावा लागला तर झाडाखाली ससार माडून तिचे स्वर्गसुख निर्माण करण्याची तिची जिद्द दिसून येते. इथे स्त्रीमनांचे अंक वेगळे पण सखोल दर्शन घडते. पुढे पाउल टाकण्याम तो सिद्ध झालेला असत. पण देवदास अगतिक झालेला आहे. प्रेम आणि कर्तव्य यात त्याची ओढाताण चाललेली असते.

ही ओढाताण संपून प्रेमाचे पारडे झुकते आणि तो पार्वतीकडे येतो तेव्हा वेळ निघून गेलेली असते. तिची लग्नतिगी निश्चित झालेली असते.

या सगळ्या प्रसंगात पार्वती कुठेहि अगतिक र लेली नाही. मुलीला लग्नाशिवाय दुसरी गति नाही म्हणूनच ठरवलेल्या वृद्ध बीजवराबरोबर ती लग्न करून सासरी जाते, तिचे गृहदक्ष पत्नीचे, वयाने तिच्यापेक्षा मोठया आणि बरोबरीच्या सावत्र मुलाच्या आईचे अशी सगळी कर्तव्ये ती दक्षतेने आणि हसतमुखाने पार पाडते.

पण त्याचवेळी देवदासविषयीची प्रीति तिने आपल्या हृदय-मंजुषेत जपून ठेवलेली असते. रोज देवघरांत निवान्तपणे पूजेला बसल्यावेळी तिचें मन चंचल होते, आणि नकळत माहेरच्या गावी कळकीच्या बेटाकडे, आंबराईकडे, बांधाच्या मेरेवरून डोक्यांत प्राण जाणून चौफेर नजर फिरवित चढार मारून येते. आणि मग तिच्या डोक्यातले पाणी टप् टप् करीत अर्घ्याच्या पाण्यांत मिसळून जाते.

इकडे देवदासच्या कर्तव्यपूर्तीने घरादाराला आणि गावाला समाधान मिळते. पण तो आपल्या पश्चात्तापदग्ध हृदयांत प्रेमभंगाची भळभळती जखम घेऊन भटकत राहातो. वेश्या आणि दाऊ यांत आपले दुःख बुडवित राहातो. पार्वतीला कर्णोपकर्णी कळते की देवदास बहकला आहे. कलकत्याला वेश्या आणि दाऊ यात तो आपली इस्टेट उधळतो आहे. दिवस दकलतो आहे.

त्यानंतर त्याच्या पित्याच्या मृत्यूची बातमी तिला कळते तेव्हा तीन वर्षांचा काळ लोटलेला आहे. ती त्याच्या आईच्या समाचाराला जाते. लग्नानंतर ती प्रथमच गावी येत असते. ती देवदासची भेट घेते. प्रेमभंगाने त्याचे हृदय भग्न झाले आहे, हाती आलंछी आपली प्रेमवस्तु आपण गमावून बसलो म्हणून तो आंतल्या आंत पिचत आहे हें तिला दिसून येते. तिचें अंतःकरण पिळवटून जाते. व्यथित मनाने ती परत येते.

मध्यंतरी अडीच वर्षे जातात. अंक दिवस तिच्या मैत्रीणीचे पत्र येते, ती लिहिते.

“देवदासची आई काशीत जाऊन राहिली आहे. देवदास अजून मधून कलकत्याहून येतो, भावाबरोबर झगडा करतो, त्याच्याकडून पैसे उकळतो आणि निघून जातो. आपल्या वाटणीची इस्टेट त्याने केव्हाच उधळून टाकली आहे. वेश्या आणि दाऊ यांचा अतिरेक झाला आहे. अशा माणसाला आटोक्यांत आणणे फक्त यमालाच साधेल. आणि तसं व्हायला जातां फार दिवस लागतील असं वाटत नाहीं.

परवा त्याला पाहिला, किती वाईट वाटतं बघून. त्याची कान्ति, त्याचं सौंदर्य, त्याचा तो विलोभनीय डोल—सगळं काही गेलं, शी ! शी ! आतां किती हिडीस दिसतोय. बघून शिसारी येते. बांधावर बंदूक टाकून सारा दिवस नदीवर हिंछत असतो दिवस मावळला की घरी जाऊन दाऊ पितो. रात्री झोपतो की पुन्हा भटकत राहातो देव जाणे !

दैवाने खर केली तुझं त्याच्याशी लग्न झालं नाहीतर तू जीवच दिला असतास. ... ..”

पत्र वाचून पार्वती क्षणभर जमिनीला खिळून राहिली. मग मोठ्या (सावत्र) मुलाला बोलावून तिने म्हटलं,

“महेन्द्र, दोन मेणे आणि भोई हवे आहेत.”

“मेणे मागवतो. पण दोन मेणे कशाला आई ?”

“तुं हवा आहेस ना बरोबर. रस्त्यातच मी मेले तर मला जधि घायला वडील मुलगा नको का बरोबर ?”

मेणे आले, भोई आले, ती संध्याकाळी माहेर—गावी पोचते. पण— ! देवदास कलकत्याला निघून गेलेला असतो.

मैत्रीण विचारते, “पाऊ, देवदासला भेटायला का आली होतीस ?”

“नाहीं, त्याला बरोबर घेऊन जायला आले होते. आपलं असं म्हणायला इथं कोण आहे त्याला ?”

“काय म्हणतेस काय पाऊ ? अग, काहीं लाजलज्जा तुला ?”

“लाजलज्जा कसली ? स्वताची वस्तु घेऊन जायची त्यांत लाज कसली ग ?”

अशी ही पार्वती. तिच्या प्रेमांत चोरटेपणा नव्हता. वासनेच्या पलीकडे गेलेले तें अनासक्त प्रेम होते. तिच्या प्रीतीचे हें दर्शन आगळे तर आहेच, पण तिचे या प्रसंगीचे नैतिक धैर्यहि अलौकिक आहे.

पार्वतीच्या चित्रणांत शरदबाबूनी आपल्या हृदयांतले सारे काव्य आणि कारुण्य ओतले आहे.

रंगूनच्या १४ वर्षांच्या वास्तव्यांत त्यांची प्रतिभा पूर्ण विकसित झाली. तिला अनुभव समृद्धि लाभली. रंगून हे सर्वाधिनि जगाची

छोटी जावूति होती. जगातल्या अनेक जातिजमाती, त्यांची संमिश्र संस्कृति, त्यांची सुखदुःखे, त्यांच्या जीवनकथा—हे सगळे जेवढे जमाप होते की सभोवार वेधक नजरेने पहाणाऱ्या माणसाच्या ज्ञानाचा तिसरा ठोळा सहजी उघडावा. शरदबाबूच्या सृजनशक्तीला इथे अनुकूल भूमि मिळाली. शिवाय उत्तमोत्तम ग्रंथांचे वाचन आणि चिंतन जखंड चावूच होते.

त्यांच्या कलाविकासाबरोबर त्यांच्या विचाराची झेप वाढली. त्यांच्या चिंतनाला खोली आली. प्रतिभा प्रगल्भ झाली त्यामुळे या काळात आणि रंगूनवी नोकरी सोडून स्वदेशी परतल्यावर त्यांनी लिहिलेल्या कादंबऱ्यांत त्यांच्या या गुणांचा जष्टपैद्य आविष्कार दिसू लागला. विशेषतः त्यांच्या स्त्रीचित्रणात ही वैशिष्ट्य प्रकटनि दिसून येतात.

त्यांची जचला (गृहदाह), सावित्री (चरित्रहीन), अभया (श्रीकान्त), राजलक्ष्मी (श्रीकान्त), किरणमयी (चरित्रहीन) भारती (पथेरदाबी), कमल (शेषप्रश्न) ही त्यांची या काळातली काही प्रमुख स्त्रीचित्रणे.

जचला ही 'गृहदाह' ची नायिका. महिम-सारखा सहृदय, नवे विचार जाचरणात आणण्याबतका सुधारक पण जबोल, आत्मकेंद्रित व कठोर तत्त्वनिष्ठ असा पति आणि त्याचा उदार हृदयी, पण तितकाच भावविश्व, उच्छ्वंखल वृत्तीचा गाढ मित्र सुरेश या दोघा तरुणांच्या मध्ये तिच्या मनाची जी दोलायमान अवस्था होते, तिचा मानसिक संघर्ष पराकोटीला पोचून शेवटी तिच्या जीवनाची जी परवड होते, त्याचे शरदबाबूंनी अत्यंत सूक्ष्म मनोविश्लेषणात्मक असे मोठे हृदयस्पर्शी चित्रण केले आहे.

जचलेचा मानसिक संघर्ष मोठया गुतागुतीचा आहे. तशी ती सत्प्रवृत्त आणि संयमी आहे. पण काहीशी भावविश्व आहे. पति महिमविषयी तिला आदर आहे. त्याच्याविषयी तिच्या अंतःकरणात खोलवर निहा आहे. आणि सुरेशविषयी तिच्या हृदयात प्रीति निर्माण झाली आहे. पतिविषयी आदर आणि त्याच्या मित्राविषयी प्रीति या दोन भावनांच्या संघर्षात तिचे मन हेलकावे खात राहाते. या दोन भावनांचे द्वंद्व हे तिच्या मानसिक संघर्षाचे मूळ आहे. हे मूळ अनेक कारणांनी आणि विविध प्रसंगांनी विषवल्ली सारखे वाढत जाते.

जचला ब्राम्ह कुटुंबात जन्मलेली आणि वाढलेली आहे. त्या समाजातले नवे विचार आणि पारंपरिक संस्कार यांच्यातला संघर्षहि ही विषवल्ली फोफावण्यास अनुकूल ठरतो. आणि प्रीतीच्या प्रमाथी प्रवाहात ती वाहात जाते.

सुरेश तिच्या जीवनात अनपेक्षितपणे येतो. आकाश निरभ्र असताना जेकाजेकी झंझावात यावा तसा तो येतो आणि मग ज्या आवेगाने तो तिला आपल्याकडे ओढतो तो आवेग त्याच्या उच्छ्वंखल वृत्तीचा परिपाक होता. आपल्या आजारी नवऱ्याला हवापालट करण्यासाठी ती वेऊन चालली असता देन मध्यरात्री, मुसलधार पावसांत, गाडी बदलण्याच्या निमित्ताने तिला फसवून मध्येच उतरवून पळवून नेण्याचे जे साहस तो करतो, तो त्याच्या ईर्ष्याखोर स्वभावाचा पिसाटपणा होता, आपल्या गाढ मित्राविषयी त्याच्या भावविश्व उतायीळ मनात उत्पन्न झालेला तो सुप्त मत्सर होता हे तिच्या प्रेमपिपासु मनाला फार उशिरा कळते. जातां वेळ निवून गेली आहे. आपणाला जातां ना जैलतीर ना पैलतीर बुडल्याशिवाय दुसरी गति नाही. याला दुसरा पर्याय नाही ज्याने या प्रमाथी प्रवाहात आपणाला खेचून आणले तो या पृथ्वीवरून कायमचा निघून गेला तो कायमचा सुटला. जातां आपली सुटका ? आपला शेवट ?

कादंबरीच्या शेवटी महिम आपल्या मामेबहिणीला—मृणालला म्हणतो, "जचला मला कुठच्यातरी आश्रमाबद्दल विचारीत होती. मला उत्तर देणे जमले नाही, कदाचित तुझ्याकडून तिला उत्तर मिळेल "

ती म्हणते, "मिळेल तर काय दादा ! माझं सारं शिक्षण तुझ्याच हाताखाली झालंय ना ? तिच्यासाठी आश्रम म्हण की आश्रय म्हण कुठं आहे तें मी बहिणीला सांगेन बरं."

मृणालच्या या शेवटच्या वाक्यांत शरदबाबूंच्या या आगळ्या चित्रणाचा परमोच्च बिंदू आहे. जचलेच्या मानसिक संघर्षाची सुटका आणि तिचीहि सुटका या जेका वाक्यांत आहे. जचलेच्या चित्रणात शरदबाबूंच्या प्रतिभेचा आणि त्यांच्या सख्खाल चिंतनाचा समसमा संयोग झालेला दिसतो.

जी विषवल्ली जचलेच्या मनाला वेदीत गेली त्यांत तिचा अक्षम्य गुन्हा नाही. उलट स्त्रीमनाच्या स्वाभाविक व्यथा त्याच्या मुकाशी आहेत त्या व्यथा म्हणजे तिला आपल्या नवऱ्याविषयी आदर आहे, निहा आहे. पण त्याचं आपल्यावर



प्रेम नाही, आपण दुर्लक्षित आहोत अशी तिची समजूत कुठच्याहि स्त्रीला व्यथित करणारी आहे. स्त्रीला पतीकडून प्रीतीचा आविष्कार हवा असतो. त्याच्या वागण्यात, त्याच्या बोलण्यात त्याच्या भावाविभावात प्रीतीचे दर्शन ती अपेक्षिते या ओलाव्यावरच स्त्रीची जीवन वेळ जगते आणि फुलते. पण पतीच्या हृदयातले प्रेम जर आत्मनिष्ठेच्या आणि कठोर तत्त्वज्ञानाच्या दगडाखाली दडून राहिले तर स्त्रीचे नाजूक मन करपून जाते तिचे प्रेमपिपासु हृदय अतृप्त राहाते. महिमच्या बाबतीत अचलेची हीच अवस्था होते. तरीसुद्धा ही व्यथा ती सयमाधीन ठेवते. पण ती सासर घरी जाताच जेव्हा तो गभीर अबोल नवरा त्याची मामेवहीण मृणालबरोबर मनमोकळेपणी बोलतो, मृणालच्या चेष्टेत दोघामधली दाट मंत्रो दिसते, जेवढेच नव्हे तर तिच्या उघड चेष्टामस्करीतून तिचे महिमशी लघ्न होणार होते हेहि अचलेला कळते. स्वाभाविकच तिच्या मनात सूक्ष्म मत्सर आणि बराबसा संशय दाटतो तिच्या संयमाला तडा जातो.

आणि नेमका त्याचवेळी सुरेश तिथे अनाहृत अनपेक्षित येतो. मनमोकळ्या बोलण्याने आणि भावनाशील वागण्याने तिच्या दुरवस्था मनावर फकर पडते. तिला दिलासा मिळतो त्यातून प्रीतीचा साक्षात्कार घडतो. सघर्ष वादत जातो सुरेशकडे टकलेले तिचे मन, त्या दोघाच गुप्त प्रेम अनेक प्रसंगी माहिमला स्पष्ट दिसते. पण त्याच्या उदार धोरणामुळे असेल तो उदासीन राहातो.

अचलेच्या चित्रणात नव्या विचारानी जागृत होऊ पाहणाऱ्या अतृप्त मनाचा उद्रेकहि दिसून येतो.

सावित्री' ही 'चरित्रहीन' कादंबरीची नायिका. शरदबाबची ही सगळ्यात वादग्रस्त नायिका. सावित्रीने जेवढा मनःस्ताप भोगला तेवढाच मनःस्ताप तिने शरदबाबुना दिला. या कादंबरीने त्याची आणि त्याच्या प्रतिभेची चांगलीच सन्वपरीक्षा घडितली. त्याचे रगूनचे घर पेटले त्यात इतर मामानासह या कादंबरीचे पाचशे पानाचे हस्तलिखित भस्मसात झाले. अधिदिव्यच ते। या सन्वपरीक्षेत त्याचा दाडगा आत्मविश्वास, त्याचा प्रखर स्वाभिमान आणि त्याची विलक्षण स्मरणशक्ति दिसून आली. शरदबाबची प्रतिभाच नव्हे तर त्याची प्रतिमाहि उजळून निघाली.

अज्ञा वसतिगृहातली खालच्या दर्जाची अंक तरूण विधवा मोलकरीण (सावित्री) कादंबरीची नायिका झाली म्हणून सगळीकडून टीकेची झोड उठली. ती टीका शरदबाबुनी सहज झेलली. पण जेव्हा काहीं सुशिक्षित सतप्त युवकांनी ही कादंबरी त्यांच्या घरी नेऊन त्याच्या समोर जाळली तेव्हा त्या नव्या मनुष्या नव्या दमाच्या युवकाच्या मतप्रदर्शनाच्या त्या भडक्या ज्वाला बघून ते अत्यंत व्यथित झाले.

तसे पाहिले तर सावित्रीच्या चित्रणात निदनीय असे काहीहि नाही. ती कुठेहि पदस्खलित झालेली नाही. त्या वेळच्या समाजात अनेक दुर्दैवी बालविधवांवर घरातच माणसकीला जाळिमा लावणारे जे दुर्धर प्रसंग ओढवत असत त्यातलीच सावित्री ही अंक दुर्दैवी बालविधवा आहे. या कुलीन ब्राम्हण वन्यला नवव्या वर्षीच वैधव्य येते. मोठ्या बहिणीचा नवरा या निष्पाप सुलीला भूलथापा देऊन घराबाहेर काढतो, आणि वाऱ्यावर सोडून देतो. ती निष्कलंक असली तरी पतित म्हणून घरी परत जाण्याचा मार्ग बंद झालेला आहे. कुलटेचा छोटा कलक कपाळी घेऊन खालच्या दर्जात पोटासाठी कुठेतरी नोकरी करणे प्राप्त आहे, म्हणून अंका वसतिगृहात ती मोलकरणीची नोकरी धरते. त्या वसतिगृहात कॉलेज शिक्षणानिमित्त राहायला आलेला सतीश तिच्या सहवासात येतो. या सधन घरच्या बेफिकीर तरुणाची ती मातृभावाने विशेष काळजी घेत सहवास वाढतो तिचे रूप, तिचे सुसंस्कृत वागणे, तिच्या बोलण्यातली बुद्धिमत्तेची चमक आणि भावनेचे माधुर्य या सगळ्यावरून तिच्या कुलीन घराण्याचा त्याला अंदाज येतो. दोघांच्यात प्रेमभाव उत्पन्न होतो. वाढतो. ती सयमी आहे. आपल्या मर्यादेचे तिला भान आहे ती वसतिगृहातून निघून जाते. पण दुर्दैव तिच्यापुढे पाउले टाकीत असते. ती कुलटा ठरावी अशा गैरसमजुतीच्या घटना घडत जातात. त्या सतीशच्या कानी येतात. अंक प्रसंग त्याने स्वता ओझरता पाहिलेला असतो. ती जाताच तो निराश बनतो. निराशेचा आसरा दाऊ. तो व्यसनासक्त बनतो. आपल्याविषयी त्याच्या मनात आसक्ति राहू नये म्हणून सावित्री ते सगळे गैरसमज मुद्दाम तसेच राहू देते. खोल्या कलकावर धर चढत जातात.

अंक दिवस तिचा सत्य इतिहास आणि खोल्या अफवा, गैरसमज वगैरे सगळे सतीशचा बंधुवत मित्र उपेन्द्र आणि अन्य मंडळींना कळते, तिचा त्याग, तिची सेवा याचा अनुभव उपेन्द्रादि सगळ्यांनी घेतलेला आहे. तिचा कठोर संयम पाहिलेला आहे. ती अगदी निष्कलंक आहे, पवित्र आहे याची ग्वाही तिला पळवून नेणारा तिचा मेहुणाच देतो. तो उपेन्द्रला म्हणतो.

‘सावित्रीच्या जिवात जीव आहे तोपर्यंत तिला भ्रष्ट करायची कुणाची छाती नाही अवढी माझी खात्री झाली आहे’

अशी ही अप्रिशलाका सावित्री कथानकाच्या शेवटी सतीशची आणि तिची भेट होते लोकनिंदेची पर्वा न करता तिच्याशी लग्न करण्याचा आपला निश्चय तो सांगतो. सुखाचा पेला तिच्या हातो येतो. आतापर्यंत भोगलेल्या अनंत यातना मानहानीची प्राणान्तक वेदना, प्रेमाची परवड—सगळे काही सपते दुदव तिची कठोर सत्त्वपरीक्षा घेऊन आता बाजूला सरकत पण ती। ती बाजूला सरकत नाही. दुर्दैवाला जिकण्याची शक्ति तिच्यात आहे सतीशने निश्चयी स्वरात लग्नाचा प्रस्ताव करताच तिच्या चेहऱ्यावरची प्रसन्नता मावळते. ती गभीर होते. विधवेने पुनर्विवाह करणे पाप नाही हे मानण्याइतका तिच्या मनाचा विकास झाला आहे पण समाजाचा विकास झालेला नव्हता. उपेन्द्रचा तिला उपदेश याला साक्षी आहे आणि म्हणूनच ती म्हणते

‘तुम्ही म्हणता मला समाज नको. मला तू पाहिजेस. मला तस म्हणतां यायच नाही मला अवढच कळत कीं श्रद्ध शिवाय प्रेम टिकू शकत नाही. समाज ज्या स्त्रीला सन्मानाच आसन देत नाही तिच स्थान स्वताच्या जोरावर कायम राखण कुणाच्याहि नवऱ्याला शक्य व्हायच नाही.’

अशी ही कठोर सयमी आणि तितकीच दूरदर्शी सावित्री.

मृत्युशय्येवर असलेला उपेन्द्र ज्यावेळी तिच्याच दखत सतीशचा हात सरोजिनीच्या हातात देतो तव्हा प्रेमभगाच्या असह्य वदनेन त्याच्या डोळ्यातला अनावर झालेला अश्रुओघ खाली मान घालून बसलेल्या सावित्रीचे हृदय फोडून जात शिरतो

तिचे मन अनावर होते आणि सयमाच्या भितोवर निरर्थक धडका मारू लागत. आसक्ति अनासक्तीला पराजित करण्याचा हास्यास्पद प्रयत्न करते. सतीश आता परक्याचा झाला हे सत्य यमासारखे तिच्या समोर उभे राहाते तिच्या भावना तिच्या वासना तिच्या सुखाची परमावधि, तिच्या दुखाचा अतिरेक आणि असह्य यातना या सगळ्यावर आज समाधि उभारली जात होती पण ती अकलहानसा सुस्कारासुद्धा बाहेर पडू देत नाही वेदनामुळे तिचे अतकरण पिळवटून निघत असते पण सर्व सहन करणारी धरित्री ज्याप्रमाणे धडधडणाऱ्या अग्नीचा उल्पातसुद्धा सहन करते त्याचप्रमाणे सावित्री आपल्या गभीर चेहऱ्यावरील अकल्पनीय बदल न देता सार दुःख गिळून स्तब्ध बसून राहाते.

हा प्रसंग जेवढा करुण तेवढाच धोरोदात सावित्रीच चित्रण करण्यात शरदबाबूनी प्रतिभेची फार मोठी उंची गाठली आहे.

कमल—ही शेषप्रश्न कादंबरीची नायिका कमल हे चरित्रहीन मधल्या विरणमयीचे स्फुट आणि प्रगत रूप आहे हिचे प्राधान्य आणि प्राबल्य जेवढे की हिने कादंबरीतली अन्य पात्रे गौण करून टाकली आहेत

शरदबाबूनी आपल्या पूर्वीच्या कादंबऱ्यात ज्या सामाजिक समस्या आणि धार्मिक प्रश्न उपस्थित केले आहेत त्याची चर्चा कमलच्या चित्रणात दिसून येते स्त्रियांवर होत असलेल्या अन्यायाविरुद्ध ती भाडते. तिला फोलपणा दाखवते

राजलक्ष्मी—ही श्रीकान्तची नायिका. सृष्टितत्वा प्रत्येक सदर अस्तुतलं तीक तोक सौंदर्य गोळा करून तिलोत्तमा घडविली तशी ही राजलक्ष्मी.

राजलक्ष्मी ही शरदबाबूच्या सपत्र कलेचे अत्युच्च शिखर आहे त्याच्या सगळ्या स्त्रीचित्रणाचा ही मुकुटमणि आहे त्याच्या अनुभवसमृद्धीचा परिपाक आहे भावनाची समाधि लागेल तेव्हा अगदी हळुवार हाताने पण अनासक्त मनाने शरदबाबू तिला धडवित होते राजलक्ष्मी म्हणजे त्याच्या प्रतिभेचे खास तेज त्याच्या कलेचे आगळे सौंदर्य आणि त्याच्या तत्त्वचिंतनाची परिपक्वता लाभलेली अंक राजसमूर्ती आहे.

शरदबाबूची पतित स्त्रियांची चित्रणे अजोड आहेत त्याच्या अन्नदा सावित्री चंद्रमुखी, आणि राजलक्ष्मी केवळ बंगालीच नाहीत तर भारतीय शाश्वत जीवनमूल्ये प्राणपणे जपणाऱ्या भारतीय स्त्रिया आहेत. असफल प्रेम आत्मिक समाधानात परिणत करण्याची याची आत्मशक्ति आजहि अशा स्त्रियांना प्रेरक ठरावी

# Women characters in Saratchandra

Sumati Kshetramade

The plight of young widows, especially those who were fallen by misfortune and were compelled by the society to deviate from the exacting code of behaviour, is the main theme of most of Saratchandra's novels. He lived at a time when the Hindu society, especially the upper strata of it, was in a socially benighted condition, and the suffering of the young widows was paramount in that society. The depiction of their mute suffering is one of the essential characteristic themes of the novels of Saratchandra.

Saratchandra painted appealing pictures of fallen widows, their mute sufferings, and their frustrations, and even their supersubtle suppressed feelings. With his fine sensibility and depth of sympathy, which were inspired by his direct experience and intimate contact with the social conditions, he drew appealing portraits of the destitute young widows. Such pathetic portraits are seldom found in Indian literature before him and even after him.

They are the products of his comprehensive observation, which was guided by innate uncommon sensibility. These compassionate portraits highlight his literature.

The silent suffering of young widows, their suppressed instincts and feelings, were vividly and realistically painted by him. They sprang from his deep experience of social life, which was hidebound by traditions. They were as inhuman as they were considered immutable. He made the mute pathetic creatures speak out their suppressed feelings with the strength of his creative art, thanks to his sensitive and compassionate mind. A gallery of portraits, which he painted of these women, is the greatest achievement to the credit of his art of novel.

These portraits are poignantly appealing, because they are the outcome of his direct and intimate experience of the society in which he lived. A true realist as he was, he had often declared that he never depicted anything which he had not seen or experienced. His transcription of life was almost photographic.

He had also wide experience of life, though his vision was limited to certain aspects of middle class life. But the aspects which he chose were of utmost significance. They immediately appealed to the human personality of his. Except for a period of fourteen years, which he passed

in Rangoon, he lived in villages of Bengal where he was able to absorb in his consciousness the deplorable conditions of the middle class life. The existence of childwidows in such families was a common feature in those days. In his book *Nārī Mūlya* he has pertinently observed that in an upper class Hindu family the value of a widow is less than a zero. Often she is subjected to inhuman treatment. She is compelled to live in a suffocating atmosphere. The account of these pathetic conditions was dinned into his ear even as a boy. It left a deep indelible impression upon his supersensitive mind. He experienced the deplorable condition all around him, including in his own family. His mother's last words on deathbed—'A woman is born with a burden of sorrows'—had left an ineffaceable impression upon his young mind. They were not mere empty words. They summarised her life of sacrifice, mute suffering, willingness to serve, and her liberality in spite of poverty—and all these traits of a woman nurtured in the Indian tradition were seen in her life. Naturally, her last words which epitomised her life remained lacerated upon his mind by the acid of pathos.

Though every portrait of his female characters has a distinct individuality, these are uniformly moulded by unswerving flow of compassion. This flow formed, as it were, the very life of the plots of his novel. This fact is well illustrated by his characters, such as Achalā in *Gṛhadāha*, Sābitrī in *Charitrahin*, Kiraṇmayī in the same novel, Bhārati in *Pathēr Dābī*, and Rājlakṣmī in *Śrikānta*.

Love between man and woman forms the motive power in his novels. The conflict between love and hidebound tradition is the main source of tragic grandeur in his novels. The external and internal conflict is based upon the deep passion of love, which sometimes assumes the force of a whirlwind. It makes the characters at times even rebellious. But even when in rebellious mood, they never transgress the boundary of decency. Because their love is selfless, they can idealise the union of hearts and the companionship of souls rather than the pleasures of flesh. Hence they remain passive, being happy in their intense feelings of love. The example of such characters are many, but outstanding are Sābitrī and Rājlakṣmī, who, with powerful resignation, spiritualise their passion of love.

Most of his heroines are of uncommon kind. Their passion of love has a peculiar origin. It is not the physical passion that inspires his lovelorn maidens. They are at heart mothers and the instinctive motherly love becomes transformed gradually and unknowingly into tender feelings. Such love which has its origin in their protective motherly feeling is the source of power in them. It gives to their feeble personality a titanic strength and becomes effective in transforming the whole personality of the man whom they love. It gives a new strength and a new tone to their character. This fact is illustrated in Śōṛaṣī-Jibāṇda and Sābitrī-Satīś love episodes. Even death is powerless against such love. It is well illustrated in Achalā-Mahim couple. The same kind of self-effacing love is seen in Achalā's devoted nursing of the plague-stricken Surēś, unminding the danger of infection and forgetting his earlier evil deeds. All her nursing fails to save him, as he is destined to die, but to the last moment she tries to save him. Another example is of Rājlakṣmī, who shows the surprising power of her reserve of strength in a similar crisis.

These abstract critical views about Saratchandra's female characters can be best illustrated by short review of some of his outstanding novels.

Among his earlier books, *Baradidi* offers a typical heroine, Mādhavī. She is worthy to be considered as his typical tragic heroine. Her pathetic story is simple and runs straight into catastrophe. She is a victim of dogged traditions and social taboos.

The hero of the novel *Surēndra* is a graduate and is the son of a Zemindar. He wishes to proceed to England for higher studies, but his stepmother refuses to allow him to go to a foreign

country. In his irritation, he leaves home in order to become self-reliant. In Calcutta, by chance, he meets the father of Mādhavī. Thinking him to be a poor helpless youth, he appoints him as a tutor to his younger daughter, Pramīlā.

Besides her, in the household, there is only her elder widowed sister, who manages the household, their mother being long dead. Surēndra teaches Pramīlā. They look upon him as an intelligent youth from a good family but poor and needy. His childlike and careless nature arouses motherly instincts in Mādhavī, and she feels sympathy for him. She takes care of him. Her motherly feelings for him gradually alter in course of time, and she becomes delicately poised between motherly solicitude for him and tender feelings of love for him. The unconscious transformation of her compassion for him into a feeling of love is so gradual that she fails even to take note of it. But the critical eyes of servants in the household detect it, and they begin to whisper among themselves about it.

One day Mādhavī writes to her friend Manōramā a lot about him. Manōramā smells her tender feelings and she warns her that as a widow she has to be cautious. Taken aback by her friend's warning, Mādhavī goes on a long pilgrimage to Kashi, in order to forget her feelings for Surēndra. But after a time she returns home, in response to her sister's urgent call. The letter calling her back was written by Pramīlā on Surēndra's suggestion.

After her return Surēndra rushes into her inner apartment which is considered out of bounds to other males by the accepted social code. At his sudden appearance in the room, her defensive moral mechanism is shaken, but she exercises control over her feelings. She dismisses him as the tutor.

Surēndra, in a distraught condition, wanders about in Calcutta and meets with an accident. He is carried to a hospital in an unconscious condition. Mādhavī gets the news of his accident. Her father visits the hospital, but Mādhavī is unwilling to accompany him, to avoid further emotional upset. The hospital authorities and Mādhavī's father come to know Surēndra's home address and learn that he is a Zemindar's son, and not a destitute person. After recovery, Surēndra goes back home.

Five years elapse. In the meanwhile, Surēndra is married and becomes a full-fledged Zemindar. But the frustrated love for Mādhavī remains rankling in his mind. Mādhavī's father also dies, and she goes to reside in her late husband's house. The house is situated in a village which lies within the jurisdiction of Surēndra's Zemindari. The manager of the estate harasses her without his knowledge. But when he comes to know that it is one Mādhavī who has been ejected from a house in his estate, he rushes on horseback for her home in the village. He finds she has already left the house. He continues the search on foot. He sees her in a boat, and he rushes to her, and dies on her lap from heart-trouble.

Thus ends the story of an ardent love in conflict with hidebound tradition.

The other important novel, illustrating Saratchandra's typical theme, is his *Dēbdās*. Very appealing is the delineation of the heroine of this novel, Pārbatī. So peculiar is her portrait that it merits particular attention.

Pārbatī is a maiden who belongs to an ordinary middle class family, while her neighbour Dēbdās, whom she comes to love, is a rich Zemindar. Dēbdās also loves her. The opposition to their union is based on social inequality—a Zemindar cannot marry a commoner. Pārbatī's parents decide to marry her to an elderly widower who is a rich man. Just when the negotiations are going on Pārbatī boldly rushes into the room of Dēbdās, at midnight, and appeals to him to save her from the proposed odious marriage. She is prepared to fight against traditions,

but Dēbdās is not prepared for it, and hence does not respond to her appeal. They part and Pārbatī is married to the elderly widower. Though her love for Dēbdās rankles in her heart, she performs all the household duties like a devoted wife, treating her grown-up stepchildren as her own. The people admire her. Her husband adores her, but they do not know that her life is blasted and her soul is dead. She silently suffers and secretly sheds tears.

Dēbdās, however, becomes so unhappy with heartache that he soon takes to wine and women to assuage his mental pain. He lives a wretched life in Calcutta and wastes his share of the large property.

Years pass. One day Pārbatī comes to know about his deteriorating condition. Pārbatī, with her stepson, rushes to Dēbdās, and finds that he has gone to Calcutta.

Her friend asks: "Have you come to see Dēbdās?"

"No. I have come to take him away with me."

"Aren't you ashamed of saying like that?"

"Not at all, there is no shame in taking away one's own thing."

Pārbatī is not constrained to admit her desire and right to take demented Dēbdās, because her love for him is spiritual, there is not a tinge of passion in it.

In the delineation of Pārbatī, Saratchandra has poured out all the poetry, purity, and pathos in his heart.

Saratchandra's fourteen years' long stay in Rangoon gave him a wide experience of life. This experience developed his creative power at its best, and his mind matured in thinking, deepening his insight into social problems which faced the educated middle class. The novels written during this period depict mental conflicts and psychology of women's mind with penetrating insight and imaginative vision. His social purpose and social criticism are clearly seen in these novels.

During this period and after returning from Rangoon, Saratchandra painted a series of fine portraits of the Indian womanhood. Typical among them are the following: Achalā in *Gṛhadāha*, Sābitrī in *Charitrahīn*, Rājlakṣmī in *Śrikānta*, Abhayā in the same novel, Kiraṇmavī in *Charitrahīn*, Bhāratī in *Pathēr Dāhī*. These are his typical heroines who walk from the novels and remain ever in the minds of the readers.

A short survey of the life of some of them will show convincingly why they can be described as 'the nurslings of immortality'. Among them, Achalā deserves the first place. She is the heroine of *Gṛhadāha*. Her husband Mahim is poor, good-hearted, but a reticent, self-centred person. He is a man of high principles and reformist views. His intimate friend, Surēś, is a generous but tradition-bound one. He is highly impulsive, and too sentimental with a strong possessive instinct. Achalā becomes lost between the attraction for both of them, but she entertains high respect for and complete faith in for the one she is married to. But at the same time love surges in her mind for Surēś. The conflict between deep regard for her husband and love for his friend disturbs her mind. The analysis of her mental condition, which is torn by the conflict, is depicted with deep understanding.

The complicated condition of her mind, owing to the conflicting emotions, is made palpable by the author, revealing every thread of complex pattern of the web in her mind.

Achalā is born in a Brahmo family and has imbibed the reformist ideas and ways. But these exist on the intellectual level only. Her mind is under the power, though subconsciously, of the traditional ways of life. Thus, the conflict in her mind is generated by a variety of cross currents.

Surēś comes in her life suddenly. She loves him for his warm affection, which she does not get from her husband. Surēś encourages this condition of her mind. He also unconsciously become jealous of his friend possessing the one he loves and who reciprocates his love. Finally, he elopes with her to a small village where the people mistake them for husband and wife. In a short time, after having known and experienced her charm, he wishes to get rid of her and treats her as an unwanted burden. Naturally, Achalā becomes distraught and feels helpless like a person swayed in the midstream, without a hope of reaching any one of the banks of the stream. She has deserted her husband, and the lover, who tricks her to leave him, becomes cold to her. In this predicament, Surēś becomes infected with plague, which is raging in the village and its environs. Surēś, being a medical man, and unminding the risk of infection, tries to treat the plague-stricken inhabitants, impulsive as he is. Moreover, it appears that he has become desparate and is impulsively seeking the way to end his miserable life, due to a guilty conscience. Achalā nurses him, unminding the danger of infection, but he dies, in spite of all her efforts to save him. He leaves all his property to Achalā.

Mahim arrives on the scene, when he is able to find out Achalā's whereabouts. A short dialogue at the end of the novel between Mahim and his cousin Mṛṇāl, who accompanies him, indicates that Mahim intends to take home Achalā.

In this short suggestive dialogue, the skill of the novelist reaches high watermark. In a single sentence the end of tension in Achalā's mind and nobility of Mahim's mind are skillfully indicated.

The poisonous creeper, which entwined Achalā's mind, is the natural outcome of her womanly nature. She feels respect for her husband, but he fails to touch bedrock of her emotions. She feels neglected by her husband. It is a feeling that ever rankles in a woman's heart. She earnestly desires the expression of warm feelings for her by the husband in his talk, and in his gestures of such sentiments—for want of which the creeper thrives and flowers. A woman's delicate mind becomes parched, if the husband is a reticent person and is enveloped in his high thoughts and his intellectual speculations. That is exactly what happens in Achalā's instance.

There were other contributory factors, which make Achalā more and more attracted to his friend Surēś. The intimate manner in which Mṛṇālīnī treats Mahim fills her mind with misgivings which are further strengthened when she learns that before her marriage with him, there was an idea of his marrying her. A modicum of jealousy infects her mind owing to this fact. It induces to foster her secret feelings for Surēś who, exactly at this juncture, appears on the scene. His free ingratiating behaviour goes a long way to foster her feelings for him. Mahim also becomes conscious of this fact, but he is too liberal a person to object to the close association of Surēś and Achalā.

Another important character is Sābitrī. She is the heroine of his novel *Charitrahin*. She has been a subject of controversy. In addition, she caused as much anguish to her creator as she herself suffered in her life. The novel, in which she figures, tested his fortitude to the fullest extent. The manuscript of the novel, ranging more than five hundred pages, was burnt to ashes, when the house in which he lived in Rangoon caught fire. Thus, he was subjected to the test by fire, as it were! But he withstood the test, showing his self-confidence and prodigious memory. He rewrote the novel, whereby he not only proved his genius, but also his dauntless personality.

Sābitrī is a maidservant in a student mess. She is a young widow. That so low a person should be raised to the status of heroine of a novel by Saratchandra was a matter of shock to

many critics and some readers. With resignation he withstood the criticism, but when some angry young men burnt a copy of the novel in front of him at his house, he was pained to see the silly demonstration of their irrational behaviour.

If seen dispassionately, there is nothing which is immoral or indecent in the delineation of Sābitrī's character. Not even in a remote sense she is a fallen woman. She is a childwidow, who has suffered from inhuman persecution in her own house. At an early age of nine she becomes a widow. The husband of her elder sister, under tempting pretexts, makes her leave her house and then he leaves her in a destitute condition. The doors of her house are closed against her, she being looked upon as a fallen woman though she is pure. She is falsely stumped as a fallen woman, and hence she has no other choice than to take to manual labour as a servant, even though she is born in a Brahmin family. She gets an employment in a student mess. There she comes in contact with one college student named Satis. He hails from a well-to-do family replete with servants and does not know how to take care of himself. Sābitrī becomes his devoted servant. She becomes a second mother to him. As he becomes more and more associated with her, Satis realises her superior culture, her beauty, her intelligence as well as the sweetness of her disposition and her cultured heart. He naturally concludes that he must be hailing from a high class family. Naturally he grows proud in himself. Sābitrī being a woman capable of exercising self-control timely withdraws herself from the tempting situation and leaves the mess. But an adverse luck pursues her and in a most unfortunate manner happens to meet her the appearance of a fallen woman. Satis comes to know about them. He felt frustrated on account of them. In order to overcome the feelings of frustration he begins to drink. Sābitrī allows his misunderstanding to remain unclarified so that he may turn away from her. She allows rumours to remain uncontradicted.

But in spite of her indifference, the friends of Satis like Upēndra, his cousin Dibākār, his wife and others, come to know of her innocence. They have already experienced her obliging serviceable nature. They have also full confidence in her abiding moral restraint. Finally, her brother-in-law, who has abducted her, comes forth to assure all concerned that as long as Sābitrī is alive, none can seduce her. He vouches this fact with his own experience.

This is Sābitrī. A spark of fire, as bright and as pure. At the end of the novel Satis meets her and declares his intention to marry her, in spite of the ill name with which the public have falsely stumped her. The cup of happiness is held before her by fate. All her sufferings, privation, and destitution seem to end now. But she turns away from the offered cup of bliss. Though she is conscious of the fact that it is not a sin for a widow to remarry, yet she is also conscious that the society is not yet prepared to accept it as a new and justifiable tradition. The advice of Upēndra makes her realise this fact. That is why she tells Satis, "You say that you do not care for the social opinion. You say that you want myself and not the society. But I know one thing that love is nurtured and nourished by mutual trust, which remains weak, when the woman is not honoured by society. She cannot feel stable in life by the love of husband alone."

Such is Sābitrī, a prudent, far seeing woman who exercises self denying restraint and turns away from proffered happiness. But the love of Satis remains rankling in her heart. This is seen when Upēndra, on death bed, makes Satis accept the love of Surojini, who is his ward. She feels the pangs of frustrated love. Her mind becomes overpowered by a variety of feelings. All her sacrifice, her conjured emotions, her deep affection for Satis, all these feelings storm her heart, when she realises that Satis now belongs to someone else. The very idea makes a tomb



of all her emotional life. All these feelings she suppresses and does not show her terrible suffering even by a sigh.

This scene is at once pathetic and sublime. The art of the novelist reaches its acme of perfection in delineating it.

His another typical character is Kamal, who figures in *Śēṣ Praśna*. In a sense, she is a much amplified version of Kiranmayī, who figures in his novel *Charitrahin*. Kamal dominates the action of the novel to such an extent that all other characters in the novel pale before her.

All the social and religious problems, which were indicated in the earlier novels by Saratchandra, are fully focused through the character delineation, actions, and words of Kamal. She fights for the rights of women and illustrates the falseness of all orthodox ideas.

The last but not the least, on the list of Saratchandra's noble dames, is Rājlakṣmī. Though she is mentioned last, she is his supreme creation, 'a nursling of immortality.' She is painted by assembling qualities of everything that is pretty and noble. 'She holds the crown among his creations. His mature wisdom radiates through her. Her portrait is drawn with such delicacy and detachment that she becomes a thing of beauty, offering delight for ever. She reminds one of the following lines of Wordsworth

A simple woman nobly planned

To warm, comfort and command

Thus unsurpassed are Saratchandra's portraits of socially condemned women. His Annadā, Sābitrī, Abhayā, Pārbatī, Chandramukhī, and Rājlakṣmī make a splendid galaxy of noble dames. They do not belong to the limited region of Bengal, but the whole of Indian Society can claim them as its own. They will ever inspire womanhood everywhere with noble aspirations and guide them as stars of first magnitude.

*Translated by Y. G. Naik*

# शरत्चन्द्र एक अमर प्रतिभा विश्व कथा साहित्यको

तुलसी बाहादुर क्षेत्री

विश्वका श्रेष्ठ कथाकारहरूको पंक्तिमा आफ्नो आसन दरिलो पारी जमाउन सक्ने एक भारतीय प्रतिभा हो—शरत्चन्द्र चट्टोपाध्याय । नारी मनको मनोवैज्ञानिक विश्लेषणको सुन्दर र आकर्षक ढंगले चित्रण गर्न सक्ने एक अद्भुत शक्ति थियो यस प्रतिभामा । त्यति मात्र होइन तिनले जीवनकालमा जो सत्य देखे र अनुभव गरे त्यसलाई निष्कल भई प्रतिबिम्बित पारे आफ्नो प्रतिभाको उज्यालोमा । कथा-साहित्यको सीमित क्षेत्रमा यो मनोहारिता अनुलनीय छ । शरत् रचनाको जादूमा पाठकहरूको मन र मस्तिष्कलाई सम्मोहित पार्न सक्ने एक अपूर्व शक्ति छ । तिनको रचनाले पाठकलाई झक्झकाउँछ- विउँझाउँछ र सत्यतिर दृष्टि लाउन कर लाउँछ ।

भारतीय नारी-चरित्रहरू शरत्-प्रतिभा आलोकमा विशेष रूपले चम्किन र टल्किन गएका छन् । यस विषयमा शरत्-साहित्यका समालोचकहरू एक मत छन् । त्यति मात्र होइन समाजबाट बहिष्कृत, निर्नन्दित र धिक्कृत नारीहरूलाई पनि तिनले आफ्नो साहित्यमा उचित र विशेष स्थान दिनमा अलिकता पनि संकोच भानेका छैनन् । तिनीहरूका चरित्रलाई निकै सहानुभूतिपूर्वक चित्रण गरेका छन् । यसले तिनको समाज सचेतन मनलाई प्रष्ट पार्दछ । आफ्नो वास्तव जीवनको व्यापक अनुभव अभिज्ञताले जो बुझेका थिए त्यसलाई प्रष्ट पारेका छन् । पुरुष शासित हाम्रो यस समाजमा नारीहरू नाना-प्रकारले अवहेलित र उपेक्षित छन् । मुखले जति नै देवी भने पनि हाम्रो समाजमा नारीका स्थान दासीका भन्दा अलिकता पनि माथिस्त्रो स्तरको रहेको छैन भन्ने कुरा तिनले यथार्थमा देखेका थिए । आदि—शक्ति भनी स्तुति गरे पनि तिनीहरू स्थूल भोग बिलासका सामग्री बाहेक बडता केही मानिंदैनन् । सेवालाभको सहज मशिन सिवाय तिनीहरू अरु केही ठानिंदैनन् । नारी जातिको न्यूनतम व्यक्तित्व-विकासको कुनै सुयोग हाम्रो समाजमा छैन । भारतीय समाजमा नारी जातिप्रतिको धेरै दिनदेखि चलिआएको यो अन्याय र अविचारले शरत्चन्द्रको हृदयमा ठूलो चोट पुर्याएको थियो । तिनको हृदय सरल र समवेदनशील थियो त्यसैले तिनले आफ्ना कथा र उपन्यासहरूमा नारी चरित्रलाई विशेष यत्न र सहानुभूतिसित चित्रण गरेका छन् । यस कार्यमा तिनले आफ्ना सारा अनुभूति र हृदयका आवेगलाई खन्याइ दिएका छन् । तिनले यस सत्यलाई केवल आफ्ना कथा र उपन्यासका काल्पनिक पात्रहरूमा मात्र सीमित राखेनन्—आफ्ना निबन्धमा पनि यसलाई प्रष्ट पार्न खोजेका छन् । नारीप्रति मनुष्य समाजमा दृष्टिभङ्गीका विभिन्न दिशाहरू उन्मोचन गर्ने अभिप्राय लिई अनिला देवीको छद्म नाममा तिनले 'नारीको मूल्य' नामक निबन्ध-ग्रन्थ पनि लेखेका छन् ।

शरत्चन्द्रले नारीका विभिन्न चरित्रहरूको चित्रण गरी भारतीय नारीको एउटा सग्लो रूप विश्व सामु उभ्याएका छन् । बिन्दु, नारायणी, बछ्छिदि, मेज्छिदि, मृणाल, राजलक्ष्मी, मावित्री, चन्द्रमुखी आदिमा स्त्री-माता, मातृस्वभावसम्पन्ना र सेवापरायणा भारतीय नारीरूपलाई प्रष्ट पारी अघि साँच्चै भन्ने 'बिराज बौ', अन्नदादिदा, सुरबाला, शुभदा, आदिले भारतीय पतिव्रता नारीरूपलाई छलङ्ग पार्दछन् । शरत्चन्द्रले यति मात्र लेखेका भए पनि भारतीय नारीको चित्र पुरा भइहाल्ने थियो । कतिले त यसो पनि भन्न सक्छन्—नारीको रूप त्यति मात्र हो सहनशीलता र मातृस्नेहवत्सलता । तर त्यति मात्रले शरत्चन्द्रको हृदयमा लागेको चोट र उनले देखेको सत्यको उद्घाटन साहित्यमा हुने थिएन । तिनको साहित्य साधना अधुरो नै रहन जान्ने थियो । शरत्चन्द्रले हाम्रा समाजमा नारीका अर्को रूप पनि देखेका थिए । यसैले अझ दृढतासित चित्रण गरे समाजका अवहेलित र निपीडित नारी—सरयू, रमा, कुसुम, ज्ञानदा इत्यादि । मार्निम एक जीवित र विचारशील पदार्थ हो...जो सुखमा हाँस्छ-आनन्द पाउँछ औ दुःखमा छटपटिन्छ, आँखा रसिएर आउँछन्—आँसु झर्दछ । समाजको अन्यायपूर्ण बन्धन तोड्न खोज्दछ । विद्रोहिणी भारतीय नारी—अभया, सुनन्दा, किरणमयी, कमल सुमित्रा आदि । यसरी भारतीय नारीको पूर्ण रूप आफ्नो साहित्यमा अमर पारी चित्रित पारी राखे ।

बंगला साहित्यको कथा र उपन्यास क्षेत्रमा बंकिमचन्द्र र रवीन्द्रनाथको प्रतिभाले पहिले नै उज्यालो पारी राखेको थियो । तिनीहरूको प्रतिभा बहुविस्तारवादी र विचित्र पथसन्धानी छन् । यिनीहरू आफ्ना अपरिसीम सृष्टिकुशलताद्वारा बंगला साहित्यमा विस्तृत क्षेत्र ढाकेर

बसेका छन् । रवीन्द्रनाथ भन्दा केवल चौदह वर्ष कान्छो शरत्चन्द्रले कथा साहित्यको सीमित क्षेत्रमा जुन मनोरम आलोक र प्रकाश सम्प्रसारित पारे— जुन सुरम्य इन्द्रोष्णी रंग साहित्यमा फैलाए त्यो यी दुइ अग्रगामी दिग्गज लेखकहरूको निम्ति पनि सम्भव भएन । लोकप्रियतामा शरत्चन्द्रले आफ्ना अघि र पछिका सबै लेखकहरूलाई आफ्नो क्षेत्रमा उछिनेर बसेका छन् । लोकप्रियतामा त शरत्चन्द्रको तुलना गर्न सकिने दोस्रो व्यक्ति छैन । लोकप्रियताले कलालाई साधारणतः निम्नस्तरतिर ढलकाउँछ भन्ने जो धारणा हामीमा धेरैधोर रहेको छ त्यो शरत्चन्द्रमा सत्य हुँदैन उनको लोकप्रियताको रहस्य अर्कै थियो । तिनको रचनाको उद्देश्य र लक्ष्य अर्कै थियो । यथार्थ र वास्तव मानिसमाथि नै तिनले आफ्ना समस्त ध्यान केन्द्रित पारका थिए । मानव बाहेक अन्य कुनै अवास्तव प्रसङ्गको उत्पादन गर्ने न त तिनीसित समय नै थियो न त आफ्नो परिश्रम लाग्ने कुनै उत्साह नै । रगत मासुले बनिएको मानव एउटा विचित्र जीव हो जसको बाहिरीभन्दा भित्री ससार अझ झन विचित्र र आश्चर्यजनक छ । यो विचित्र र आश्चर्यजनक मानव मन नै तिनको अनुसन्धानको केन्द्र बिन्दु थियो । तिनले मानवहृदयको अन्तर्द्वन्द्वको विश्लेषणमा विशेष रुचि र उत्साह देखाएका छन् । शरत्चन्द्रलाई प्रकृति प्रेमले अथवा ईश्वर चेतनाले कहिले स्फूर्ति जगाउन सकेन जागे पनि साहित्यमा उतार्ने प्रयोजन तिनले ठानेन । तिनको समग्र ध्यान दृष्टि केवल मानव रूपो विचित्र जीवमाथि नै केन्द्रीभूत थियो । तिनका भाषा सरल वाक्यहरू छोटो वैज्ञानिक र सोझै पाठकको हृदयलाई छुने हुन्थे । तिनको रचना भङ्गी शब्द प्रयोगको विशेषत्वमा तिनको लक्षक-व्यक्तित्वलाई प्रष्ट पार्दछ । यही नै थियो शरत्चन्द्रको सफलताको रहस्य ।

शरत्चन्द्र एक यस्ता साहित्य-कलाकार हुन् जसको जीवन सदैव अशान्त अस्थिर र अधोर रह्यो । जसको मन एउटै बन्धनको घेरा भित्र तसिएर बस्न नसक्ने एक गतिशील स्नात थियो ।

दुख-कष्टका आधार-वहामा इटारिएर हत्याइएको जीवनमा तिनको के गरेन र ? जीवनको पहिलो चरणमा तिनी पाँच पल्ट सम्म सन्यासी भई घर छोडेर अशान्त र अधोर मनलाई शान्तपार्न विश्व चारैतिर निस्के । पाँच-छ वर्षसम्म संगीत चर्चामा एउ चित्तले तर्हीन भई लागे । यात्रा पार्टीमा 'सखी' भई गीत गाई हिँडे । साँप पकडिने र साँपलाई वश पार्ने उपाय र साँप सिकललाई साँप नचाउने तमझीवालाहरूसित धुमिहिँडे । तिनले जीवनमा के गरेन र ? के महेन्द्र र ? त्यसपछि कलकत्तामा आए । जीविक हो खोजीमा । त्यहाँ तिनको भाग्य जुरेको थिएन । समुद्रपारी बर्मा देश रङ्गमा गई नौकरीमा लागे । रङ्गमा बस्दा पनि तिनको जीवन कहिले शान्त शिष्ट भई तोरिएका कार्यक्रमका गोरेटोमा चलेन । आखीरमा रङ्गन छोडी स्वदेश फर्के ।

हाम्रा देशका अधिकांश लेखकहरूको जीवनको ढाँचा, चाला र सोत बडो सोझो र गतानुगतिक छ । यिनीहरू कि त अभिजात्य वर्गको स्तरबाट कि त साह्रै दासत्व मान्ने मध्यवर्ग वा निम्न मध्यवर्ग पारिवारिक जीवनबाट आएका हुन्छन् । यिनीहरूको जीवनसित शरत्चन्द्रको जीवनको मेल अलिकति पनि छैन । तुलना गर्न पनि सकिन्न । यिनको जीवनको तुलना कसैसित गर्न सकिन्छ भने नेपालीका महाकवि देवकोटाका जीवनसित । देवकोटाको जीवनमा पनि सासांरिक दुख-कष्टको आँधी हुरीहरू यति विघ्न चलन गएका थिए कि तिनको जीवन कहिले पनि शान्त र धीरा भई बग्न सकेन । तर त्यस्तै अशान्त र अधोर वातावरणमा जर्ने कल्पनाको जो चमत्कार तिनले साहित्य सुट्टिमा देखाए त्यो अन्यत्र दुर्लभ छ । यस देशका कलाकारहरूका जीवनसित यस साहित्यकारको जीवन मानसिकताको तुलना हुन सक्दैन—गर्न सकिन्न । एक खोजे पाश्चात्य लेखकहरूसित यसको उदाहरण मिल्छ । रपियाका डस्टएभिस्व अथवा गोर्की, आइरीस कवि डेभिस्, अग्रज कवि गोल्लडम्मिथ शेली र बायरन फरासली कथाकार मायाशा अमेरिकन कवि हयुटम्यान आदि शरत्चन्द्रका सगोत्रा साहित्यकारहरू हुन् ।

शरत्चन्द्रका छोटो कथाहरूको सख्या साह्रै धेरै छैन । लामा र छोटो कथाहरू मिलाए टाकटुक पन्द्र सौभन्दा बढी हुँदैन । यति थोरै कथा लेखेर पनि तिनी विश्वमा एक असाधारण चमत्कारपूण कथा स्रष्टा हुन गए । तिनका महेश अभागीका स्वर्ग मामलाका फल पञ्चादशा बरागी रामका सुमति आदि कथाहरू विश्वका कुनै पनि उत्कृष्ट कथासित दँजाउन सकिन्छन् । तिनले लेखेका उपन्यासहरूको सख्या बरू पच्चीस तीसवटा छन् । पहिले पहिलेका उपन्यासहरू जम्मै गाँउले चरित्र र गाँउले पटभूमिमा लेखेका छन् । जस्तै शुभदा, देवदास, अरक्षणोया, पण्डित भशाङ विराज बो आदि । अरू उपन्यासहरू पछि उमेर छिप्पिएर लेखेका हुन्—जस्तै चरित्रहीन, गृहदाह, पथर दाबी, शेष प्रश्न आदि ।

यस्ता असाधारण कथा साहित्यको प्रतिभा शरत्चन्द्र चट्टोपाध्यायको जन्म भएको एव सय वर्ष पुगेको उपलक्ष्यमा हामी पनि हाम्रा हार्दिक श्रद्धाञ्जलि अर्पण गर्दौ । नेपाली भाषामा शरत्चन्द्रका कृतिहरूको विशुद्ध अनुवाद गरी नेपाली पाठकहरूलाई पनि यस अद्वितीय प्रतिभासित परिचय गराउन सके नै, शरत्चन्द्र प्रति असल श्रद्धाञ्जलि अर्पण हुन जाने छ ।

# Saratchandra :

## The immortal genius of world literature on stories

Tulsi Bahadur Chhetri

Saratchandra Chattopadhyay is a literary genius to hold an enviable position among the great novelists of the world. His genius had an astonishing power to give vivid and engaging analysis of human mind. Besides this, he fearlessly reflected through the shining light of his genius the truth he perceived and felt throughout his life. In the limited field of novels he created incomparable masterpieces. His writings exercise a magic spell on the heart and the mind of the readers. They stir the readers out of slumber and force them to look at the truth.

The Indian womanhood, in particular, has shone brilliantly in the light of his genius. All his critics agree on this point. He never hesitated to give a proper place in his novels to the socially outcast and maligned women. Their character, too, received his sincere sympathy. This clearly underlines his social consciousness. A man of vast experience and knowledge, he depicted with ruthless clarity whatever he felt. The truth is that in a patriarchal society like ours, women have always been neglected and maltreated. We call them 'Debi' but in our social life, their status is no higher than that of ordinary maidservants. And this truth he had really perceived. We may praise them as representing 'Primordial Energy', but in reality they are, to us, nothing but useful commodities to satisfy our carnal desires, they are but machines to serve our physical needs. They hardly get even the minimum opportunity for self-development in our society. This wrong and injustice, suffered long by the women in Indian society, caused Saratchandra great pain. Being simple and sympathetic at heart, he could create female characters in his novels with love and care. All his emotions and feelings were poured into these works. He had tried to reveal these truths, not only through the characters conceived in his imagination, but also through his essays. To express the many facts of social viewpoint, in respect of women, he even wrote an essay collection, *Nārī Mūlya*, under the pseudonym 'Anilā Dēbī'.

Saratchandra brought before the eyes of the world different types of feminine character peculiar to India, through his depiction of their characters. In Bindu, Nārāyaṇī, Baṇadidi, Mējdidi, Mrṇāl, Rājīlakṣmī, Sābitrī, Chhandramukhī, etc., their loving motherliness and the instinct for tender service are revealed. And his Birāj Bau, Annadādidi, Surabālā, Śubhadā represent the fidelity of

wives to their husbands. Had he produced these characters only, he could have completed his task of depicting all aspects of Indian womanhood. Many may say that forbearance, motherly care, and love are the only qualities worth mentioning among the women. But the pangs his heart suffered, and the truth his eyes perceived, required much more for their expression, if his literary attempts were not to be halfhearted. Saratchandra had seen other types of women, too, in our society. So, with greater courage, he created the socially neglected and oppressed women—Sarajū, Ramā, Kusum, Jñanadā, etc. Man is a living and thinking being ; he laughs while he is happy and joyous, and becomes restless in sorrow, and writhes in pain and tears roll down his eyes. In this mood, he tries to break the unjust social chains. So, Saratchandra went one step forward and created the rebels among the Indian women—Abhayā, Sunandā, Kīranmayī, Kamal, Sumitrā, etc. Thus, he made immortal the totality of Indian womanhood through his literature.

In the Bengali literature, the field of novels and short stories were already lighted by the genius of Bankimchandra and Rabindranath. Their genius had a very wide\* range and penetrated uncharted avenues. Their creativity occupies a very wide area of the Bengali literature. But Saratchandra, only fourteen years junior to Rabindranath, spread a much more colourful and picturesque light over the limited area of fictions and novels than was possible for his two great predecessors. That is why his popularity is incomparable and has not been attained by anyone before or after him. Generally, we think that popularity lowers the quality of literary production ; but this is not true of Saratchandra. There was a different mystery behind his popularity. The aims and objects of his writing were something else than popularity. He had concentrated his attention on the true and real Man. Nothing except Man interested him, motivated him, or could engage his time. Man, composed of flesh and blood, is a strange creature, whose inner world is stranger and more mysterious than the outer one. This mysterious and strange human mind was the centre of his investigation. As such, he showed a special knack and zeal in analysing the inner conflicts of human mind. He was never inspired by love of nature, or consciousness of God, or even if inspired, he never felt like bringing them into his works. All his attentions were centred on the strange creature Man. His language was simple ; his sentences were brief, and they touched the heart of his readers straightaway. The speciality of his technique and diction clearly exposed his personality as a writer. This was the mystery behind his success.

Saratchandra was such a literary artist whose life had always been stormy and in turmoil—and whose mind was a flowing torrent, unable to stay behind an encirclement. What did he not do in his life, made turbulent by the storms of distress and privation ? Five times in his early youth he left his home as a 'sanyasi' to seek peace and tranquillity for his disturbed and impatient mind. For five or six years he remained engrossed in the culture of music. He went singing from village to village, as the 'Sakhi' in mobile folk-drama units. To learn the art of snake-charming he roamed with snake-charmers. What did he not do in this phase of life and what did he not suffer ? Later on, he came to Calcutta in search of a livelihood. But his luck was not with him there. It was in Burma, in Rangoon across the sea, that he found an employment. In Rangoon, too, he had no peaceful or consistent routine life. At last, he left Rangoon and returned to his homeland again.

In our land, most of the writers enjoy a life whose form and flow do not contain anything extraordinary—whether they hail from the aristocratic class or from the submissive middle class or lower middle class families. Saratchandra's life, in no way, resembles theirs, nor can be compared to theirs. If there is one whose life can be compared to Saratchandra's, he is the great poet Devkota of Nepali literature. In Devkota's life, too, there were so many storms

of miseries and heavy odds that it could not sail smoothly in peace, and yet, inspite of this, the literature he created has no parallel elsewhere. But it is not possible, nor can be done, to compare Saratchandra's life and mind with anyone of this country. Perhaps, if we search for it, we may find his parallels among the Western writers. Dostoyevsky and Gorky of Russia, Davies the Irish poet, the English poets Goldsmith, Shelley and Byron, Maupassant of France, and Whitman of America, etc., belong to the type of Saratchandra.

Short stories written by Saratchandra are few in number—his genuine short and long short-stories will not be more than fifteen or sixteen in total. But even these few short stories have established him as an extraordinarily gifted short story writer in the world. His *Mahēś Abhāgīr Swarga*, *Māmlār Phal*, *Ēkūdaśī Bairāgī*, *Rāmēr Sumati*, etc., can be compared favourably with the great short stories of the world literature. His novels, on the other hand, number between twentyfive and thirty. His early novels were all in rural settings and invloved rural people, for example, *Śubhadā*, *Dēbdās*, *Birāj Bau*, *Arakṣaṇīyā*, *Paṇḍit Maśāi*, etc. Other novels were written when he matured in age, for example, *Charitrahin*, *Gṛhadāha*, *Pathēr Dābī*, *Śēṣ Praśna*, etc.

On the occasion of the birth centenary of this extraordinary literary genius, we, too, pay our homage and respect to Saratchandra Chattopadhyay. The only way for us, to pay our homage to Saratchandra, is to introduce the readers of the Nepali literature to this incomparable genius through genuine translation of his works in Nepali.



# शरत्-साहित्यका केही नारी-पात्रहरू

कमला सांकृत्यायन

बीसौं शताब्दीको भारतमा बंगालका सुविख्यात उपन्यासकार श्रीशरत्चन्द्र चट्टोपाध्यायका नाम नसुनेको कुन पाठक होला ? शरत् बाबु बंगालका सर्वाधिक लोकप्रिय कथाकार भएका छन् जसको जन्म-शतवार्षिकी सम्पूर्ण देशमा बडो श्रद्धापूर्वक सम्पन्न गरिंदै छ । भारतीय नारीवर्ग का हितचिन्तक मंवेदनशील यस औपन्यासिक प्रति विश्वका समस्त नारीवर्ग आफ्नो हार्दिक श्रद्धाजली अर्पण गरिरहे छन् ।

काव्यगुरु रवीन्द्रनाथ ठाकुरले जुन युगमा आफ्नो सर्वतोमुखी प्रतिभा लिएर साहित्यको प्रत्येक विधासाथै उत्कर्ष अवस्थामा पुरयाइ-दिएका थिए, ठीक त्यही बेला शरत्चन्द्रको आकस्मिक अभ्युदय र अपार प्रतिष्ठा भारतको साहित्यिक वातावरणका लागि विस्मयकारक भयो । उनले बंगालको सामाजिक र पारिवारिक जीवनमा जुन समस्त उदाहरणहरू पेश गरेर पाठकहरूको ध्यान आकर्षित गराए, विश्लेषण तथा मत प्रकट गर्ने जुन प्रणालीलाई उनले स्वीकार गरे, उनका पूर्ववर्ती कुनै पनि उपन्यास-लेखकमा हामी पाउँदैनौ । शरत्चन्द्रका सम्बन्धमा जस्तो प्रकारको धारणा हामीहरूमा स्थिर भएको छ, त्यो उनको मौलिकता माथि नै प्रतिष्ठित भएको छ । शरत्-साहित्यको आफ्नै एउटा मौलिक विशेषता छ जुन चाहि अन्य साहित्यिकहरूको कृतिमा पाइन दुर्लभ छ । त्यो विशेषता हो समाज तथा सामाजिक पृष्ठभूमिमा निषिद्ध समाज-वर्जित प्रेमको विश्लेषण, भारतीय समाजको रीति-रिवाज र परम्परागत संस्कारहरू र अति कटु आलोचना र स्त्री-पुरुषको पारस्परिक सम्पर्क बारे निर्भीक पुनर्विचारमा उनले जुन साहस, सहानुभूति र अति उदार मनोवृत्तिको पारख्य दिएका छन्, त्यो अन्यत्र दुर्लभ छ । आफ्नो यस्तो प्रखर विचार तथा कथनशैलीद्वारा उनले भारतीयहरूको हृदयमा जुन सनातनत्वाल देखि स्थिर भएको संकीर्णतालाई पन्छाइ दिए र अत्याधुनिक योरोपीय साहित्यसित तादात्म्य स्थापित गरी दिएका छन् ।

शरत्चन्द्रले बंगला कथासाहित्यलाई आफ्ना अनेक सुन्दर सुन्दर कृतिहरू प्रदान गरेर समृद्ध बनाएका छन् । लघु उपन्यास, विराटकाय उपन्यास, तथा अन्य कथाकृतिहरू मिलाएर आज सम्मको अनुसन्धान अनुसार जम्मा ५८ वटा पुस्तकहरू उपलब्ध छन् । यी उपन्यासहरूमा सबै नै अत्यन्त रोचक तथा मर्मस्पर्शी छन्, तर फिनिहन्मध्ये सर्वाधिक प्रसिद्ध कृतिहरू हुन् - बङ्गदीदी, रामेर सुमति, चन्द्रनाथ, बिन्दुर छेले, बिराज बहू, पथनिर्देश, परिणीता, चरित्रहीन, निष्कृति, मेजिदीदी, दर्पचूर्ण, पञ्चसमाज, श्रीकान्त : ३ भाग : बैकुण्ठेर विल, अरक्षणीया, देवदास, गृहदाह, स्वामी, छवि, देना-पावना, पथर दाबी, शेष प्रश्न, विप्रदास, अनुराधा, शुभदा आदि-आदि । शरत् बाबुले आफ्ना यी उपन्यासहरूमा कतिपय भारतीय विशेषगरी बंगाली नारी पात्रहरूको, सुन्दर चित्रण गरेका छन् । ती उल्लेखनीय नारीहरूको संख्या १०८ पुगिसकेको छ ।



नारी जातिको दुःख कष्ट मानसिक स्थिति, प्रेमपूर्ण आन्तरिक हृदयलाई सूक्ष्म रूपले चिन्ने शरत् बाबुले नारीहरूको महत्त्वलाई स्वीकार गर्दै 'नारीको मूल्य' (नारीर मूल्य)मा भनेका छन्—'सुसभ्य' मनुष्यको स्वस्थ, संयत, तथा शुभ बुद्धिले नारी जातिलाई पुन अधिकार अर्पित गर्ने कुरा गर्दछ, त्यही मनुष्यको सामाजिक नीति हो र त्यसैद्वारा समाजको कल्याण पनि हुन्छ । धर्मपुस्तकहरूमा के लेखिएका छन्, के लेखिएनन्, यसबाट मात्रै समाजको कल्याण हुंदैन । नारीको मूल्यको विवेचना गर्दा हामीहरू आज सम्म यसै नीति र यसै अधिकारका कुराहरू भन्दै आएका छौ । "....यो आशा पनि गर्दैनौ कि कुनै यस्तो पनि समय आउने छ जब पुरुषहरूको संख्या बढ्दै जानेछ र स्त्रीहरू चाहि विरलै हुने छन् । नारीको मूल्य निर्भर गर्दछ पुरुषको स्नेह, सहानुभूति र त्याग धर्ममाथि । भगवानले उसलाई दुर्बल बनाएको छ र पुरुष उसको यस निर्बलताको पूर्ति माथि मानिएका कृतिहरूतिर हेरेर नै गर्दछ । धर्म पुस्तकमा लेखिएका कुराहरूको मीनमेख निकालेर र तिनको दुर्बोध्य अर्थको सहायताले त्यसको पूर्ति गर्न सक्दैनन् ।"

शरत्चन्द्रले शुरुदेखि नै नारी समाजलाई सामाजिक मुक्ति नभएता पनि साहित्यिक मुक्ति दिलाउने दृढ संकल्प गरेका थिए । उनले गरेको यो दान तथा कर्म निर्विकल्प सत्य भएको छ । आफ्नो मंतव्यको पुष्टिमा उनले बढी सीधा र सरल तथा मर्मस्पर्शी युक्तिहरू पेश गरेका छन् औ तर्क गर्ने कलात्मक ढग त उनको आफ्नै विशेषता छ । यसै कारण उनका कृतिहरूमा सामाजिक मूल्यबोध हुनाको साथै साहित्यिक मूल्य पनि कम छैन ।

माथि उल्लिखित शरत् बाबुका सबै कृतिहरूमा लेखकले नारीपात्रको विशेष सृष्टि गरेका छन् । शरत्बाबु बाहेक भारतीय भाषाका अन्य लेखकहरू तथा बंगालका कतिपय प्रतिष्ठित लेखकहरूले नारीलाई केन्द्रविन्दु बनाएर साहित्य लेखेका छन्, तथापि विश्वकथा साहित्यमा शरत्बाबुका नारी चरित्रको आफ्नै एउटा विशिष्ट स्थान छ । नारी जीवनका विभिन्न तथा विरोधी पक्षहरूले उनका उपन्यास तथा कथाहरूमा अत्यन्त मार्मिक अभिव्यक्ति पाएका छन् । बंगालका नारी-समाजको मुक्तिका लागि शरत्चन्द्रको बढ़ता हात रहेको छ । यस कुरालाई यहाँका सामाजिक इतिहासकारहरूले आगामी वर्षहरूमा राम्ररी चित्र र बुझ्न सक्ने छन् । भारतीय नारीहरूको दुर्दशा नै शरत्बाबुको कलाको मूल प्रेरणा-शक्ति भएको हो, यस कुरामा कुनै प्रकारको अप्रासंगिकता छैन । उपन्यासकार कै प्रसिद्ध निबन्ध 'नारीको मूल्य' त मानो उनको साहित्य कलाको मैनिफेस्टो नै हुन गएको छ । तत्कालीन नारीजीवनको दुर्दशाको विवेचन तथा समाधान उनले आफ्नो यस विस्तृत निबन्धमा प्रस्तुत गरेका छन् र यसैको कलात्मक निरूपण उनले आफ्नो कथासाहित्यमा गरेका छन् । तत्कालीन बंगालको नारीजीवनको अपरिसीम वेदनाहरू उनका रचनाहरूमा प्रकट भएका छन् ।

यद्यपि आफ्नो निबन्ध 'नारीको मूल्य' (नारीर मूल्य) मा शरत्बाबुले अत्यन्त विदग्धतापूर्ण तरिकाले नारीको महान मूल्य निर्धारित गरेका छन्, तर पनि नारीको महत्तालाई उनी पुरुषसङ्गको सम्बन्धसित नै अंकित गर्दछन् । नारीको स्वतन्त्र मूल्यको उनले कहीं पनि विवेचना गरेका छैनन् । कदाचित उनका अधिकांश उपन्यासहरूको नामकरण तिनका नायकहरूको नामको आधारमा गरिएको छ, उदाहरणतः चन्द्रनाथ, 'विप्रदास', श्रीकान्त', 'देवदास', 'काशीनाथ' इत्यादि ।

शरत्बाबुका कृतिहरूमा 'चरित्रहीन', 'श्रीकान्त' र 'गृहदाह' बाहेक शेष उपन्यासहरूमा उनले पुरातन धाराको नै अनुसरण गरेका छन् । 'काशीनाथ', 'देवदास', 'चन्द्रनाथ', 'परिणीता', 'बछ्दीदी', 'मेजिदीदी', 'बिन्दुर छेले', 'रामेर सुमति' 'विराज बहू' एवं 'निष्कृति' आदि समस्त उपन्यासहरूका लेखकले बंगाली परिवार भित्र हुने विरोध तथा घात-प्रतिघात कै कथा लेखेका छन् । यिनीहरूमा कति चाहि ता एकदम नै प्रेम-वर्जित, एकान्तमुखी गृहस्थ परिवारमा एउटा स्वल्प र अप्रधान वस्तु हो भन्ने कुरोलाई लेखकले स्पष्ट गरेका छन् । जहाँ कहीं प्रेमको वर्णन गरिएको छ त्यहाँ शरत्बाबु त्यस पवित्र तथा अव्यक्त प्रेमको चित्रण गर्नमा साह्रै नै सिद्धहस्त देखिन्छन् ।

शरत्का नारी पात्रहरूको सूक्ष्म अध्ययन लेखकको नारी सम्बन्धी विशिष्ट धारणाहरूको स्पष्ट परिचायक हो । नारी एवं प्रेमलाई पर्याय ठानिएको छ । शरत्बाबुका नारीहरूको प्रेममा सेक्सको प्रधानता छैन । उनका पुरुष-पात्र तथा नारीपात्रहरूको पारस्परिक सम्बन्ध सामान्य वासनादेखि रहित छ । यसै कारण शरत्का कृतिहरूमा स्नेहको निर्मल मन्दाकिनी बहन्छ, वासनको क्लृप्ति वैतरणी होइन ।

शरत्बाबुका विभिन्न उपन्यास तथा कथाहरूमा चित्रित नारीपात्रको सूक्ष्म अध्ययन गर्नका लागि प्रथमतः हामीले तिनीहरूको एउटा स्थूल वर्गीकरण गर्न उचित छ । यस वर्गीकरण अनुसार हामी विभिन्न कोटिका नारीपात्रहरूको दर्शन पाउन सक्छौ । वर्गीकरण यसरी गरिन्छ—

- १। स्नेहमयी माताहरु, जसमा कतिपय प्रौढ़ावस्थामा पुग्दा विधवा भइसकेका छन् ।
- २। कठोर स्वभाव भएका तथा कर्कशा गृहिणीहरु ।
- ३। सीधा तथा सरल हृदय प्रेमिकाहरु जुन चाँहि अविवाहिता, विवाहिता तथा विधवा तीनै थरीका हुन्छन् ।
- ४। गन्भीरस्वभावा नारीहरु जसले एकान्तिक प्रेमको विरोध गर्दछन् वा प्रेम गर्नलाई महापाप ठान्दछन् ।

उपरोक्त वर्गीकरण अनुसार हामी यहाँ शरत्का केही प्रमुख नारी पात्रहरुको चारित्रिक विशेषण गर्दछौं ।

प्रथम कोटिका नारीहरुमा 'मेजदिदी'की हेमागिनी 'परिणीता'की भुवनेश्वरी, 'रामेर सुमति'की नारायणी एवं 'विप्रदास'की दयामयी जस्ता नारीहरु उल्लेखनीय छन् । यी जम्मा नारीहरु आफ्नो स्वभाव अनुसार अत्यन्त कोमल र संवेदनशील छन् । यिनीहरुको शरीर पनि अन्य महिलाहरुको भैं हड्डी र चामले बनिएको छ, तर यिनीहरुको हृदय अपरिसीम स्नेह र ममताले बनिएको छ । यस वर्गका नारीहरुमा माताको वात्सल्य मात्र आफ्ना संतानप्रति सीमित छैन, अपितु अरुका छोराछोरीहरु माथि उति नै स्नेह र ममताको स्निग्ध धारा बगाउँदछन् । नारीको वात्सल्यमय स्वरूप आफ्नो सम्पूर्ण महिमासित 'मेजदिदी'की हेमागिनीमा अंकित भएको छ ।

'मेजदिदी' उपन्यासमा दुइजना नारीको चित्रण भएको छ । कादम्बिनीको देवरानी हेमागिनीको स्वभाव अत्यन्त कोमल र वात्सल्यपूर्ण छ । परिवार विहीन चौध वर्षको बालक किशन आफ्नी स्नेहमयी माताको मृत्यु भए पछि आश्रयको खोजीमा आफ्नी अति कठोर स्वभाव भएकी सौतेनी दिदीकहाँ आइपुग्छ । कादम्बिनी बडो मुश्किलले भाईलाई बस् दिन्छे । बिहान बेलुकी दुइ मुट्टी खस्रो भात खानका लागि किशनले गोरुले जस्तै जोतिपर काम गर्न पर्छ र पनि दिदी कहिल्यै खुशी हुन्न । भाईले कहिल्यै पनि विश्राम पाउँदैन । काम बिराएको खण्डमा किशनले प्रायः भोक-भोकै पनि बस् पर्छ । अपार मातृस्नेहको वातावरणमा हुँको किशनको बालहृदय दिदीको अत्याचार सहन गर्नमा अभ्यस्त हुन्छ ।

हेमागिनी अनाथ किशनको यो कष्ट देखेर साह्रै नै दुखी हुन्छे र किशनकी माइली दिदी (मेजदिदी) भएर यथाशक्य उसलाई माताको सुल र स्नेह दिने चेष्टा गर्छे । कादम्बिनीलाई आफ्नो भाईप्रति देवरानीको यस्तो कोमल व्यवहार मनपर्दैन र बेला-बेलामा गृह-क्लह पनि भइरहन्छ । यता हेमागिनीले आफ्ना पति विपिनसित किशनलाई आफ्नै साथमा राख्ने अनुरोध गर्छे, तर विपिनले आफ्ना दाजुसंग केही नराम्रो होला कि भन्ने डरले यो अनुरोध स्वीकार गर्दैन । अन्तमा स्नेह र प्रेमको नै विजय हुन्छ । कादम्बिनी र उसको परिवारले निहुरिने पर्दछ । हेमागिनीले किशनलाई आफ्नो तेलो सन्तानको रूपमा आफ्नै घरमा राख्छे । यसरी हेमागिनीको चरित्र 'मेजदिदी'मा महनीय भएको छ ।

हेमागिनी कै प्रतिरूप हामी 'परिणीता'की भुवनेश्वरीमा देख्छौ । भुवनेश्वरीको हृदय त्यसै पनि कोमल छ, तर ललितको अनाथ अवस्थाले तिनको हृदयमा विशेष रूपले सहानुभूति जगाइदिन्छ । यसै कारण तिनको आफ्नो पुत्र शेखर र ललितामाथि समान भावको प्यार र स्नेह छ । शेखरसित गुप्त रूपले परिणयमा बाँधिन भन्दा पहिले ललिता अलिक डराउँछे । तर शेखरले जब भन्छ—'पिताज्यू यस बारेमा रिसाए ता पनि मेरी आमा त खुशी नै हुनेछन्' । र जब आत्मीयतामा शेखर ललितालाई लिएर माताको चरणस्पर्श एकैसाथ गर्द छ, त्यसबेला भुवनेश्वरीका आँखाबाट आनन्दको आशु खस्छ । साँचै नै, तिनको हृदयमा ललिताप्रति जुन मातृस्नेह छ त्यो उम्लिएर आउँछ ।

'रामेर सुमति'की नारायणीमा माताको जुन स्नेह धेरै विघ्नवाधाहरुले अतिक्रमण गरेर मुखरित भएको छ, यसैलाई लेखकले वाणी दिएका छन् । नारायणी आफ्नो पुत्र गोविन्दलाई साह्रै माया गर्दिन थिई भन्ने कुरा होइन, तर उसको चरित्रको विशेषता यही हो कि उसका लागि गोविन्द र रामको बीचमा कुनै भेदभाव छैन । उसले रामलाई पनि आफ्नो मायाशु हृदयमा पुत्रलाई भैं स्थान दिन्छे ।

शरत्बाबुका नारीचित्रण को दोस्रो वर्गमा आउँछन्- कठोर स्वभाव भएका तथा कर्कशा नारीहरु । यिनीहरुमा धेरैको चारित्रिक संवेदना मूलतः स्वार्थभावले भरिएको हुन्छ । लोभ र क्रोधको भावनाले तिनीहरुलाई सताइराखेको हुन्छ । यस्ता नारीहरुको रूप हामी 'मेजदिदी'की कादम्बिनीमा देख्न पाउँछौं ।

तृतीय श्रेणीका सरल, सीधा तथा प्रेमपूर्ण हृदय भएका नारीहरुका चित्रण शरत्बाबुका प्रायः समस्त कृतिहरुमा भएको छ । भारतीय नारीसुलभ गुणहरु भएको हुनाले यिनीहरुको चरित्र-चित्रण आदर्शवादी भएको छ । यिनीहरुमा विवाहिता रमणीहरु, पतिव्रता, स्नेहशीला तथा शुचिताका प्रतीक छन् । यस्ता नारी पात्रहरु हामी विराज बहू उपन्यासकी नायिका विराज बहूको उज्ज्वल व अटल चरित्रको अध्ययन गर्दा

पाउन सक्छौं। विदाजको चरित्रको दृढ़ता शरत्बाबुको उक्त कृतिको मूल संवेदना हो। विराज बहूको चरित्रको मुख्य संवेदना हो उसको पतिभक्ति। सती-सावित्रीको सामु आफ्नो व्यक्तित्वलाई राखेर उ भन्दछे—‘सतीत्वको मर्यादा पालन गर्ने मजस्ता अनेक स्त्रीहरू संसारमा हुन सक्छन् तर सतीत्वको महिमालाई मैले भन्दा बढी बुझ्ने कुनै अन्य स्त्री होली, यस कुरालाई स्वीकार गर्न म तयार छुइन।’ विराजको यो गर्वपूर्ण वाणी उसको दृढ़ चरित्रमाथि नै आधारित छ। वस्तुतः उसको चरित्रमा पतिभक्ति यति अधिक छ कि वास्तव संसारमा उसको सत्ता एकदम एकांतिक भएको छ। उसको सम्पूर्ण प्रेम एकांगी भएको छ।

शरत्-साहित्यमा चित्रित केही प्रेमिकाहरू यस्ता पनि छन् जो सानै अवस्थामा विधवा हुन्छन्। यिनीहरूको व्यक्तित्व उदासीन तथा निर्भिकार छ तर हृदयमित्र प्रेमापि पनि प्रज्वलित भइरहन्छ। समाजको भयले यिनीहरू कुनै उपयुक्त पाइलो चारन सक्दैनन्। यसकारण यिनीहरूको चरित्र असहायहरूको अस्तो देखिन्छ। यस्ता पात्रमा उदाहरण स्वरूप हामी ‘बड़ी दिदी’की माधवीलाई लिन सक्छौं। यिनीहरूको हृदय निष्कपट हुन्छ र प्रेमको भावनाले हृदय ओतप्रोत भएको हुन्छ।

वर्गीकरणको चौथो श्रेणीमा यस्ता रमणीहरू देखाइ पर्दछन् जसको व्यक्तित्व एकदम गहिरो छ, गहनतम छ। यी नारीहरू पनि मूलतः प्रेमिका नै हुन् तर यी प्रेमिकाहरू सीधा र सरल नभएर आफ्नो स्वभावले अत्यंत जटिल देखिन्छन्। प्राचीनको प्रति विरोध यिनीहरूको चरित्रको मूल संवेदना हो। यिनीहरूको चरित्र दृढ़ भएता पनि अस्थिर छ र अस्थिरतामा दृढ़ता पनि लुकेको हुन्छ। कुन बेला यिनीहरूले कस्तो पाइलो छटाउलान् सो पाठकहरूलाई पनि थाहा हुदैन। यिनीहरू नैतिक मान्यता तथा प्राचीन परम्परादेखि भिन्न, विद्रोहिणी प्रकृतिका हुन्छन्। यस्ता नारीपात्रहरूलाई खोज्नु हो। भने, हामीले ‘चरित्रहीन’ की किरणमयीलाई हेर्ने पर्छ। चरित्रहीनमा लेखकले प्रथम पटक एउटी यस्ती नारीको व्यक्तित्व हाम्रा सामु राखिदिएका छन् जो उनका पूर्व परम्पराका नारीहरू भन्दा भिन्न छ। किरणमयीमा नारीको रूप जनैतिक होइन, पूर्ण नैतिक छ। नारीको यस रूपमा उपन्यासकारले अटल पतिभक्ति राखेनन्, एकनिष्ठ प्रेम पनि राखेनन्, बरु मानवीको हृदयको अस्थिरताको मनो-वैज्ञानिक चित्रण गरेका छन्। शरत्बाबुको यस प्रकारको नारी-समाजमा भावनाको संगसंगै बुद्धिको पनि पूर्ण उन्मेष देखिन्छ। प्रेमको अस्थिरता उत्तिकै सत्य छ जति कि स्वयं प्रेम—यस तथ्यको प्रतिपादन किरणमयीको चरित्रमा हामी देख्छौं। किरणमयीको अंधारो मनको गहिरघाईमा प्रवेश गरेर हेर्दा हामीले उसको विषादपूर्ण हृदयको पवित्रताको दर्शन पाउँछौं।

यसै श्रेणीको अर्को नारीपात्र ‘शेषप्रभ’की कमल छे। कमल अति सुन्दरी छे औ लक्ष्मीस्वरूपा पनि। जीवनको प्रत्येक क्षेत्रमा निस्संकोच भएर बस्नु कमलको चरित्रको एउटा प्रमुख विशेषता हो। वस्तुतः कमलको जीवनप्रति दृष्टिकोण अत्यन्त समृद्ध छ। उसको यस दर्शनमा विलासिता छैन, एउटा समन्वय छ। यस तथ्यलाई राम्ररी बुझे पछि हामी त्यसका धेरै यस्ता कार्यहरूमा संगति मिलाउन सक्छौं जो बाहिरबाट विचित्र किसिमको देखिन्छ। कमलको विचारधारामा वर्तमानलाई सबभन्दा अधिक महत्ता दिइएको छ। उसको जीवनको पूजा वर्तमानमाथि नै बाँचेको छ। अति स्पष्ट र सरल अभिव्यक्तिको सहारा लिई उ अजितलाई भन्दछे—“म यो स्वीकार गर्दछु कि जहिले पनि अति पाउँछु त्यसलाई नै सत्य मानेर लिन सक्। दुःखको दाहले मेरो विगतका सुखको शिशिरविन्दुहरूलाई सुकाउन सकेनन्... यस जीवनमा सुख-दुखमा कुनै पनि सत्य छैन, अजितबाबु, सत्य हो केवल उसको चंचल क्षण। बुद्धि र हृदयद्वारा त्यसलाई प्राप्त गर्नु नै हो साँचो प्राप्ति।” कमल भौतिक सुखवादः ‘Materialistic happiness’ की पोषक देखिन्छे। उसको जीवनको आनन्दलाई एक एक क्षणसित संचित गर्ने चेष्टा गरिरहेकी छे। आयुको व्यापकता भन्दा अधिक उ क्षणको असीमत्वलाई महत्त्व दिन्छे। कुनै पनि वस्तुको मूल्यांकन कमल उसको स्थायित्व अथवा उसको दीर्घताद्वारा गर्दैन। उ जीवतमा कुनै पनि प्रकारको पलायनलाई स्वीकार गर्दैन। उपन्यासमा हामी देख्छौं—कमलको जीवन प्रायः अभावमा नै बितेको छ। आनन्दवादकी प्रबल पोषिका भएर पनि स्वयं उसको व्यक्तित्व भौतिक सुखदेखि टाढै रहेको छ। यो एउटा विचित्र तथ्य हो कि सिद्धान्तरूपले तपस्याको विरोध गरेता पनि उसले आफैलाई विभिन्न प्रकारको साधनाद्वारा परिष्कृत बनाएकी छे। त्यसको यस तपस्यापूर्ण व्यक्तित्वलाई न त संसारसित नै गुनासो छ औ न नियति (fate) सित नै।

‘गृहदाह’की अचलालाई पनि यसै श्रेणीमा राख्न सकिन्छ।

माथि उल्लिखित वर्गीकरणको पाँचौ तथा अंतिम श्रेणीका नारीहरू हुन् ती वृद्धा, कर्कश स्त्रीहरू जो सक्रिय जीवनदेखि अवकाश लिएर झगडा कलह र बाझाबाझ गर्नका लागि सधैं तत्पर देखिन्छन्। यिनीहरूको बुद्धि रचनात्मक नभएर विनाशतिर दृष्टिकोण हुन्छ। क्रोध प्रकट

गर्नु, झगडा गर्नु यिनीहरूको स्वभाव हो र यी वृद्धाहरू वाणीमा पनि कटु हुन्छन् । अशिक्षाको वातावरणमा पालिएका हुनाले यस्ता स्त्रीहरूको चरित्र अझ तीतो भएको हुन्छ । यस वर्गका प्रतिनिधि पात्रहरूमा 'रामेर सुमति'की दिगम्बरी, 'अरक्षणीया'की स्वर्णमंजरी र 'पंडित मोशाघ'की बुद्धी वैष्णवीलाई लिन सक्छौं । रामेर सुमतिकी दिगम्बरीको चरित्र दुष्ट प्रकृतिको भएता पनि अत्यंत स्वाभाविक छ । हामीलाई उ प्रति रिस पनि उद्विग्न, हाँसो पनि उद्विग्न र साथै त्यसको दुष्कर्म प्रति अज्ञातरूपले सहानुभूति पनि राख्छौं । हाम्रो मन उपरि दया पनि जाग्दछ । रामप्रति दुर्भावना एवं आफ्नी छोरीप्रति कृत्रिम मोह, यही उसको चरित्रको विरोधी तत्व हो । उसको प्रत्येक कार्यमा हाम्रा सामु एउटी बुद्धी स्त्रीको मस्तिष्कको विकृति देखाइ पर्दछ ।

"अरक्षणीया"मा दुष्ट चरित्र दुर्गाकी विधवा जेठानी स्वर्णमंजरीको छ । दिगम्बरी, एलोकेशी, बुद्धी वैष्णवी आदिको सम्पूर्ण व्यक्तित्वको तीक्ष्णपन स्वर्णमंजरीको जिम्मामा परेको छ । उ स्वभावतः कटु हुना साथै वाणीकी पनि कटु छे । उपन्यासकी नायिका ज्ञानदालाई त्यो प्यास काटिएको परी, पीपलको रूखको चूङ्गल पनि भन्छे । चारित्रिक कटुता साथै स्वार्थवृत्ति उसको व्यक्तित्वको मूल संवेदना हो । आफ्ना लागि कल्याणको मार्ग खोजेर उ सदैव अरूका लागि अकल्याणको कामना गर्छे । आफ्नी देवरानी र उसकी छोरी ज्ञानदाका निमित्त उ एक पैसा पनि खर्च गर्न चाहन्न । स्वार्थपरताको कारणले नै स्वर्णमंजरीमा हृदयहीनताको मात्रा कम छैन । कथाकार पनि भन्दछन्—'त्यसमा हृदय नामको कुनै चीज ता थिएन नै, उ यस मुसीबतदेखि अलगै थिई ।' जब उमले निर्दोष, असहाय, एवं हतभागिनी ज्ञानदालाई अतुल कै सामु अपमानित दंगले कटुवचन भन्छे । "हजार पल्ट भनिसकेँ, तेरो मुख हेर्दा सातपीढी सम्म नर्कमा जानु पर्छ, मेरो सामुनै तं न आइज ।" यस कथनबाट लेखकको टिप्पणीको अर्थ सहजै बुझ्न सकिन्छ । एउटी अबोध बालिकाका लागि यस्ता तीखा कटुवचनहरूको प्रयोग त स्वर्णमंजरी जस्तो कर्कशा नारीले मीठै गर्न सक्छे संक्षेपमा भनी—स्वर्णमंजरी स्वभाव एवं वाणीमा कठोर, कलहप्रिय, हृदयहीन तथा मर्यादाशून्य छे ।

जुन युगमा शरत्चन्द्र आफ्ना उपन्यास र कथाहरूको सृजन गरिरहेका थिए, त्यो युग बंगालको सामाजिक इतिहासमा आफ्नो विशेष महत्त्व राख्छ छ । कति त राष्ट्रीय चेतनाको जागृतिको फलस्वरूप, सुधार आन्दोलनले यस प्रदेशका निवासी प्रमाणित भइसकेका थिए । ब्राह्म समाजको स्थापना भएको केही काल पछि यसका नियमहरू तथा अनुशासनमित्र पनि रूढिको प्रवेश भएको थियो । ब्राह्म समाजका अधिकांश धाराहरू तत्कालीन नारी-समाजसित सन्बद्ध थिए । यसका संस्थापक स्वयं राजा राममोहनराय नारी-समाज-सुधारका प्रबल समर्थक थिए । बहुविवाह, बालविवाह तथा अनमेल विवाहको उनले घोर विरोध गरेका थिए । विधवा-विवाहका र स्त्री-शिक्षाका उनी समर्थक थिए । पर्दा-प्रथा र सती-प्रथालाई उनले जर्नसमेत समाप्त गरिदिए । यस प्रकार राजा राममोहनरायको प्रयत्नले तत्कालीन बंगालका नारीवर्गको दुर्दशाहरू मानिस-हरूले राम्ररी बुझ्न थालेका थिए ।

शरत्चन्द्रले जुनबेला लेखन प्रारम्भ गरे, त्यस बेला सभ्य सुधारवादी आन्दोलनको केही शुभ प्रभाव देखिन थालेको थियो । तर पनि त्यो पर्याप्त थिएन । बंगालको तत्कालीन नारी-समाजमा अशिक्षाको अभिशाप थियो । शिक्षा प्रचारको जुन प्रबन्ध त्यसबेला उपलब्ध थियो त्यसको उपयोग पनि उति गरिंदैन थियो । त्यस बेला सानै उमेरमा कन्याको बिहे गरिदिने चलन पनि थियो । सामाजिक संतुलन बिग्रिएको हुनाले कन्याको बिहेमा धेरै धेरै दाइजो दिने र लिने चलन पनि थियो । यसकारण तत्कालीन बंगालमा कन्याको जन्म प्रायः शोचनीय घटना हुनथाल्यो । बाल-विवाह र बहु-विवाह अधिकाधिक संख्यामा हुन थाल्यो । प्रवास-पचपन्न मातृको बुद्धिसित तेरह-चौध वर्षकी कन्याकै बिहे हुनु साधारण कुरो भयो ।

यसका साथै पश्चात्य संस्कृतिसित सर्वप्रथम सम्पर्क भएको हुनाले तत्कालीन बंगालमा संस्कृति बीच संघर्ष पनि केही तीव्र हुन गयो । बंगालका नारीहरूको दुखित अवस्था देखेर त्यसबेलाका धेरै कलाकारहरूले यसको विरुद्धमा आवाज उठाए, तर शरत्चन्द्रको विद्रोह सबै भन्दा बढ्ता सशक्त, तर्कपूर्ण र प्रभावोत्पादक थियो । आफ्नो समाजका कुरीतिहरूलाई जहाँ उनले चित्रण गरे वहाँ उनले यसको अमिट आस्था तथा मर्यादाको पनि अंकन गरिदिए । यस सम्बन्धमा उनको दृष्टिकोण कहिल्यै निराशावादी रहेन । स्त्री-समाजको बकालत शरत्चन्द्रले नितान्त बौद्धिक स्तरमा गरेका छन् । उनको विशेष निबन्ध 'नारी को मूल्य' उनको महत्त्व अध्ययन, चिन्तन तथा संवेदनशीलताको सूचक हो । राम्रोलाई नराम्रोदेखि छुट्याउनु उनी राम्ररी जान्दथे । प्राचीन तथा नवीनमा जे-जति राम्रो तथा शुभ छ, ती सबै उनका लागि ब्राह्म छन् । यसै सिद्धान्तको प्रतिपादन उनले आफ्नो साहित्यमा गरेका छन् । उनका कथाका चरम उद्देश्य पतिहरूलाई सहानुभूति दिनु र तिनीहरूलाई माथि उठाउनु हो ।

बंगालका नारी-समाजका निमित्त शरत्चन्द्रले जे-जति गरे, त्यसको वास्तविक मूल्यांकन जागामी युगका सामाजिक इतिहासकारहरूले गर्न सक्नेछन् । जुन कार्यलाई ठूला भन्दा ठूला सुधारकले पनि एक साथ मिलेर गर्न सकेनन्, त्यस कार्यलाई शरत्को कलाले मानो जनायास नै सम्पन्न गरिदियो । यस दृष्टिकोणले हेर्दा, बंगालका नारी-समाजलाई मुक्ति दिलाउने श्रेय धेरै मात्रामा शरत्चन्द्रलाई नै दिन सकिन्छ । नारी-समाजका उद्धारक संवेदनाशील कलाकार शरत्चन्द्रलाई संसारका समस्त नारीवर्गको श्रद्धाजलि अर्पित गरिन्छ ।

# The women in Saratchandra's literature

Kamala Sankrityayan

In twentieth century's India, is there any reader who has not heard the name of Saratchandra Chattopadhyay, the famous son of Bengal? Saratchandra is the very popular story writer of Bengal, whose birth centenary is being celebrated this year in the whole of this land.

At a time when the respected Kabiguru Rabindranath Tagore with his versatile talent was popularising all aspects of Bengali literature, the sudden coming and popularity of Saratchandra was something for the literary world to behold. He had attracted the readers' sentiments by putting forth in front of them examples from the social and family life of Bengal, which were adapted to his own special style of analysis and his own way of thinking. This special quality of his is not to be found in preceding writers. Our respect and admiration for this great writer is based on this very originality of his. Saratchandra's writing has its own special flavour that is rarely found in any other's literature. The speciality is this – the analysis of love that is forbidden by society and social backgrounds, and his bitter criticism of the tradition and custom-bound nature of Indian Society. He has shown great courage in his sympathy with and broadminded rethinking on the affection between man and woman. This is not found elsewhere. With his progressive thinking and style of expression, he sweeps away the traditional narrow-mindedness of the Indians. It was Saratchandra who helped to establish Indian literature side by side with contemporary European literature.

Saratchandra has enriched Bengali fiction with his large contribution of sensitive works. According to modern researchers there are 58 works of Saratchandra available, which include short novels, large novels, short stories, etc. All his novels are very romantic and tender. Some of their names are: *Baradidi*, *Rāmār Sumti*, *Chandranāth*, *Bindur Chhēlē*, *Birāj Bau*, *Patha-Nirdēś Parinitā*, *Charitrahin*, *Niṣkṛti*, *Mējdidi*, *Darpachūṇa*, *Pillī Samāj*, *Śrikānta* (four volumes), *Baikunthēr Will*, *Arakṣaṇīya*, *Dēbdās*, *Gṛhādāha*, *Swamī*, *Chhabi*, *Dēnā Pācṇā*, *Pathēr Dābī*, *Śēṣ Praśna*, *Bipradās*, *Anurādhā*, *Śubhadā*. The writer has beautifully characterised Indian women, especially the Bengali women in his novels. There are about 178 women characters created by Saratchandra in his novels.

Saratchandra, who knew so well the painful life and troubled mental situation of women as also the sincerity of their love, has accepted their importance in the society. He has said in his

essay *Nārīr Mūlya* that if the healthy, sober and clear head of the cultured man thinks about giving women their legal rights, this is the right social path and through this there will be good to society. Society cannot be perfected only according to what is written or not written in the scriptures. We talk again and again about women's social rights. We do not think about a coming age which will have men in great number and just a handful of women. The value of women depends only on the love and affection, and the sympathy and sacrifice of men. God has created woman as weak, and men must support her in her weakness with his goodness. Yet it cannot be accomplished with what we find written in the holy scriptures.

Saratchandra has always tried to give his women characters their freedom - if not social, then at least literary freedom. His contribution in this respect is unchallenged. He puts forward in a straight, simple, clear and strong argument his thoughts on women. There is novelty in his arguing methods. Therefore, in his writing, there is to be found both social thinking as well as literary merit.

Saratchandra has created many kinds of female characters in his novels. No other writer except Saratchandra has written making women the central point of his works. Therefore, in the world of fiction, the female characters created by Saratchandra have their own place and importance. The controversial aspects of women's life, which have been narrated, receive a very sensitive expression in his fiction. It is evident that Saratchandra has made a great effort through his novels for the emancipation of women in Bengal. Future social historians will accept this truth in the coming years. The tragedy of Indian women undeniably inspired Saratchandra's art. He is always aware of and often describes so vividly the debased condition of women of his time. And so he expresses his sympathy for women through the medium of his novels.

But though Saratchandra emphasised the great importance and value of women in his essay *Nārīr Mūlya*, he always links women's importance with men's life. He does not talk anywhere about an independent place for women alone. Perhaps this is the reason why many of his novels are named after their heroes, for example *Chandranāth*, *Bipradās*, *Śrīkānta*, *Dēbdās*, *Kāśināth*, etc.

In all his works except *Charitrahīn*, *Śrīkānta*, and *Gṛhadāha*, Saratchandra has followed the traditional style. The writer of *Kāśināth*, *Dēbdās*, *Chandranāth*, *Parīṇitā*, *Baradidi*, *Mējdidi*, *Bindur Chhēlē*, *Rāmēr Sumati*, *Birāj Bau*, and *Niṣkṛti*, has almost in all of his works written the story of the struggle within Bengali families. In some of his works he describes clearly the lack of importance for love in these loveless and strained families, and whenever love is being described, Saratchandra excellently depicts what is pure, unexpressed and untold.

A detailed study of Saratchandra's female characters is a clear introduction to his mode of thinking about women. Women and love are alter egos. There is, however, no place for sex in Saratchandra's novels. The love and affection between his male and female characters is sexless, and they live within a platonic love. Therefore, we see in Saratchandra's literature the flowing currents of love, but no unclean stream of sex.

We should here classify the female characters of Saratchandra's literature for a more detailed study :

1. Loving mothers who are widowed in their middle age.
2. The cruel natured women with harsh tongues.
3. The simple hearted loving women who are of three categories, that is, unmarried, married, and widowed.

4. The serious type of women who do not accept the deepness of love and who think all love a big sin.
5. Old, quarrelsome, talkative women.

We shall now proceed to study and explain the characteristics of Saratchandra's female characters according to the above classification.

Among the first type of women, that is loving mothers, Hēmānginī of *Mējdidi* Bhubanēśwari of *Parīṇitā*, Nārāyaṇī of *Rāmē Sumati* and Dayāmayī of *Bipradās* are notable. All these women are, according to their nature, very soft and sentimental. Although their bodies are mortal, made up of flesh and bones, their hearts brim with unlimited affection and love. The women of this category shower their love and affection not only on their own children, but on all other children too. This affectionate nature of women is depicted with all its glory in *Mējdidi*'s Hēmānginī.

There are two women described in *Mējdidi*. Hēmānginī, the sister-in-law of Kādambinī, is a soft hearted and affectionate woman. Kēṣṭō, a fourteen year old boy who has lost his mother and family, comes to stay with his cruel hearted stepsister. With great reluctance Kādambinī allows him to stay with her family. To get two morsels of rice, Kēṣṭō has to work very hard in his sister's household. But his sister is never pleased with him. Kēṣṭō is never permitted to rest. He has to live without food whenever he errs in his work. He who was looked after with so much care and affection while his mother was alive has to learn to live under this tyranny.

Hēmānginī sees all this torture on Kēṣṭō and feels very sorry for him. Therefore, acting as a second sister (Mējdidi), she tries to give as much as possible her motherly affection to Kēṣṭō. Kādambinī does not like Hēmānginī's affection towards her brother, and often there are quarrels over this in their family. On the other hand, Hēmānginī requests her husband Bipin to keep Kēṣṭō with them, but Bipin, out of fear of being misunderstood by his elder brother, does not accept his wife's request. At last the victory goes to love and affection. Kādambinī and her family has to surrender and Hēmānginī is at last allowed to keep Kēṣṭō in her house as her third child. With this story the character of Hēmānginī is glorified in *Mējdidi*.

We can see in *Parīṇitā*'s Bhubanēśwari the same likeness of Hēmānginī. The heart of Bhubanēśwari too is very soft, and the poor condition of Lalitā has created a special sympathy within her heart. She has, therefore, equal love for her own son Śēkhar and the orphan girl Lalitā. Lalitā is at first hesitant in loving Śēkhar, but Śēkhar says: "My father might get angry for this relationship, but I am sure that my mother will be happy." And when Śēkhar takes Lalitā to his mother and together they touch her feet, tears of joy flow from the eyes of Bhubanēśwari. Once more we see the motherly love of a woman's heart manifesting itself to Lalitā.

Nārāyaṇī of *Rāmē Sumati* is another woman who is tender hearted. The affection of her heart never cares for such disturbances as Saratchandra describes. Nārāyaṇī loves her own son Gōbinda, but she also loves Rām, her nephew. She does not think that there is difference between these two boys. She gives Rām the place of a son in her motherly heart.

In the second category of Saratchandra's female characters are women who are cruel and harsh voiced, their heart is full of selfishness and full of greed and cruelty. We can see in Kādambinī in *Mējdidi* this type of character.

We find the third category of women in all of Saratchandra's novels. They are women who are very simple, sober, with heart full of love and sincerity. Saratchandra has been idealistic in depicting this type of characters as typical of Indian women's good qualities. Some of them are



married women who are symbols of virtue and purity. A woman of this kind can be found in the heroine of the novel *Birāj Bau*. She is a very bright character. The main sentiment of this novel is Birāj's strong character and this sentiment is betrayed in her love for her husband. She thinks herself more *sati* (chaste) than any other woman. This is her pride.

We also find some women who have been widowed since their childhood. Their existence is meaningless and they have been leading very sad lives. They are nevertheless human beings. So the fire of love is always burning in their hearts. They cannot go ahead with courage because of the fear of society. Their characters appear to us to be very weak. We can see this type of women, for example in Mādhavī of *Baradidi*. However, these women have all pure and simple hearts, and they are sentimental as they are moved by love.

Within the fourth category, we see those women who have a mysterious personality and it is very hard to define their character. Although they, too, were lovers once, their lack of simplicity makes them very hard to understand. The main strength of their character lies in their fighting against the traditional structure of life. Their character is very strong but dispassionate though there is passion hiding behind this 'dispassion'. Readers do not know when women of this type will change their minds. They are rebellious women who are indifferent towards virtue and tradition. We find this type of character in Kiraṇmayī of *Charitrahin*. In *Charitrahin* the writer has brought forward a kind of woman who is very different from his other female characters. The woman in Kiraṇmayī is pure in 'character'. In this character the writer does not show the woman devoted to her late husband, nor does he reveal her strong love to other people but he analyses her dispassionate heart. In this type of female characters of Saratchandra's we find wisdom as well as deep feelings towards society. The deeper we study Kiraṇmayī the closer we come to her heart's purity and sadness.

There is another woman, Kamal of *Śēṣ Praśna*, who comes in this category. Kamal is very beautiful and full of virtues. The special ability of her character is to stay on any field of life with courage. Her feelings for human life are very rich. She is not lax in morals when viewed like this; it becomes possible to understand her character, although she seems outwardly very peculiar. Kamal gives too much thought to her present. It is the present moments of her life that are most valuable. She believes in a materialistic happiness and values every passing minute. She does not agree with running away from life. In the novel, we read that Kamal has spent her life in poverty. She desires happiness, but all her life has been kept away from the material contentment that leads to happiness. She is pure in heart and has no complaints against this world. We can also include Achalā of *Gṛhadāha* within this category.

And now for the fifth and last group of women characters—those who are old, quarrelsome, talkative, harsh-voiced, those who are always free enough in their own idle lives to start fight within other people's households. This is typical of the ordinary and old Indian women. These are the women who have no creative mind but, instead, always destroy other people's happiness. They are inclined to anger and to quarrel frequently with others, especially other women. Usually brought up in an illiterate and uncultured atmosphere they are bitter characters. In this category fall the characters like Digambarī of *Rāmēr Sumati*, Swarṇamañjarī of *Arakṣaṇīyā*, and the old Baisnabī of *Paṇḍit Maśāi*. Digambarī's character is cruel but natural. We are angry with her, we laugh at her and we, unknowingly, even sympathise with her in spite of her cruelty. For, she does all her mischief because of her worries and her poverty. We feel sorry and charitable towards her. She hates Rām and loves her own daughter artificially, these being the too controversial facts of her character. And in her habits we see the senility of old minds.

Another bitter character is Swarṇamañjarī of *Arakṣaṇīyā*, who is a widowed sister-in-law

of Durgā. In other words, Swarnamañjarī is the embodiment of all the three characters of Digambarī, Ēlōkēśī and old Baisnabi. She is bitter in nature as well as in tongue, always scolding Jnanadā and using ugly names and words with reference to her. She wishes happiness for herself, but has no good wishes for others. She does not wish to spend a single paisa for her sister-in-law and her daughter Jñānadā. This shows her selfish heart. The writer in his novels thus gives critical portrayal of this old woman.

The time when Saratchandra was writing his novels and short stories was a time of importance in the social history of Bengal. The people of Bengal during that period were much influenced by the reform movement or Renaissance. Some time after the establishment of the Brahma Samaj, a new freedom marked its rules and discipline. Many of the regulations of the Brahma Samaj were connected with woman's place in society of that time. Its founder Raja Rammohan Roy himself was a reformer who uprooted the *purdah* system and the system of *Sati* which were the evils of the Indian society. And because of the efforts of Raja Rammohan Roy, people began to understand the tragedy of women in Bengal of those days.

When Saratchandra started writing, some of the fruits of the reform movement were just ripening. But this was not enough. The Bengali women of that period were still uneducated; although there were some facilities for obtaining an education, they were still unutilised. Child-marriage was very common at that time and the dowry system was also encouraged by society. In old Bengal, the birth of a daughter was regarded as an evil event for the family. Polygamy prevailed everywhere. A fourteen year old girl might have to marry a man of fifty or fiftyfive years; this was nothing extraordinary.

During this period, Bengal came to have its first connection with the Western culture, and the struggle between two cultures intensified. The writers of that period raised their voices on seeing the pathetic plight of Bengali womanhood. But the struggle of Saratchandra was stronger than that of others, and more critical and more impressive too. He not only described the evils of his own society but also personified it in all its beauty and glory. He was no pessimist about the fate of society, and steadfastly spoke for women's rightful place in society with the help of persuasive intellectual argument. His essay on *Nārī Mūlya* is the fruit of his deeper study of the thinking and the sentiment of all womanhood. He also knew how to separate good from evil and thus could accept the beauty from both old and new society.

Saratchandra has evaluated all this in his literature. The final aim of his work is to arouse the sympathy of husbands and to raise women to their rightful place in society. How much Saratchandra has done for Bengali women will only be comprehended by future generations. Work that could not be properly done by many a great social worker was imperceptibly accomplished by the art of Saratchandra. When we look from this angle, most of the credit as a reformer must go to Saratchandra. And to this benefactor of women and reformer of old social evils, and to the great artist, we, the women of the whole world, pay our homage on the occasion of his birth centenary.



# ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ର — ଆମ ସମୟର ପରିପ୍ରେକ୍ଷିରେ

ବିପୁଲକୃଷ୍ଣ ଦାସ

ଜୀବନ ଓ ସାହିତ୍ୟର ମୋଗୁଣକୁ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିକୋଣରୁ ଅଲୋଚନା କରାଯାଇପାରେ । ରାଜନୀତିକ, ସାମ୍ବାଦିକ, ଐତିହାସିକ, ଆର୍ଥିକାତ୍ମକ ଓ ମନସ୍ତାତ୍ତ୍ବିକ ପ୍ରଭୃତି ଦୃଷ୍ଟିକୋଣ ଏହାର ଅନ୍ତର୍ଗତ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଆଜିକାଲି କୌଣସି ନ୍ୟାୟିକ ସମାଲୋଚନାର ସାହିତ୍ୟିକ ଆବେଦନ ହୁଏତ ସଂଜ୍ଞାହୀନ ଥାଏ । ଆଜି, ଏକ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତୀ ଅଧ୍ୟୟନ କରି ଆଲୋଚନା 'The man of letters in the modern world' ନାମକ ପ୍ରବନ୍ଧରେ କୁହନ୍ତି, ଜୀବନର ଐତିହାସିକ ଅବସ୍ଥା ଅଳ୍ପ ବାହ୍ୟ ଏବଂ ବିଲୁପ୍ତ । କିନ୍ତୁ ପସାନ୍ଦରେ; ସାହିତ୍ୟିକ ଅଳ୍ପତା ବା ଅପ୍ରାପ୍ତିତା ଉପରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଜୀବନର ଏକ ନିବିଡ଼ ଗୋଟାଏ ଲାଞ୍ଜ ହୁଏ । ପୁଣି ଯେଉଁ ମୋଗୁଣକୁ ନୈତିକ ଓ ମାନସିକ । ଅବସ୍ଥା ତାହା, ମନନଶୀଳ ଓ ପ୍ରାଥମିକ ଅଧ୍ୟୟନ ଅପେକ୍ଷା ଯଥା । ଜୀବନର ଏହି ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତାପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତିକ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ଯେବାକୁ ହେଲେ ଆମକୁ ଜୀବନର ଅର୍ଥ ବୈଷୟିକ ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟ କରିବାପାଇଁ ହେବ । ଏହା ସହଜ ମନୁଷ୍ୟକୁ; ନୈତିକ ଓ ମାନସିକ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଉପାଦାନରେ ଚିନ୍ତାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ । କିନ୍ତୁ (ଦୁର୍ଭାଗ୍ୟବଶେଷ) ଜୀବନର ଏହି ଅର୍ଥାନ୍ତରାଳ ଅଳ୍ପ ବାହ୍ୟ ଏବଂ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତାପେକ୍ଷ । କାରଣ ଅଧୁନିକ ସାହିତ୍ୟିକ ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟାନୁସାରେ ମାନବ, ଆତ୍ମା ସଂବେଦନଶୀଳ ନାହିଁ କିମ୍ବା ଅଧିକ ବିଶଦ୍ଧିତ ହେବାକୁ ଲାଗିଛି । ନୂଆ ଶୃଙ୍ଖଳା ଯଥା ପାରିବାସିକ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଓ ଶୈଳୀ ଉଭୟ କରି ଏକ ସ୍ଥଳ ଓ ସେହିକ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ଏହାର ପ୍ରାଥମିକ ନ୍ୟାୟିକ । ଅଧୁନିକ ଯୁଗର ଏହି ସବୁ ଶୃଙ୍ଖଳା ପ୍ରଭାବର ସାମ୍ବାଦିକ ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା ଯାହାକୁ ଏକ କୁ ସାମାଜିକ କରିଛି । ସୁଦ୍ଧା ଅନ୍ୟ ସାହିତ୍ୟ; ବିଶେଷକରି ଅଗ୍ନିଶିଳା, ଅଗ୍ନିଶିଳା, ନାଟ୍ୟକଳା ଓ ହାସ୍ୟ ନାଟ୍ୟକୁ ଆକର୍ଷଣ କରିଛି । ଏହାର ଏକ ବୈଷୟିକ କଳା ; ଜୀବନର ଐତିହାସିକ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧ (ପ୍ରାଥମିକ) କୁ ମନୁଷ୍ୟର ହେବା ପାଇଁ ଅସମର୍ଥ ହୋଇଛି । ଗୋଟିଏକ ଏହାକୁ “ବୈଷୟିକ ସଂସ୍କୃତି” (consumer culture) ଓ ଦୁର୍ଭାଗ୍ୟ ଦେଇ ଅବହେଳା କରିଛନ୍ତି । ସାହା ଯେତେବେଳେ ତାହା, ପାଣ୍ଡି, ମୌଳିକ ଓ ଅଧିକ ଅବସ୍ଥାକୁ ଉପଲବ୍ଧ କରିବାକୁ ମନେ ହୁଏ ସାହିତ୍ୟ । ଏହି ସବୁ ଲୌକିକ ନା; ବୈଶ୍ୱାମିକ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ମନେ ମନେ କରୁଛି । କାରଣ ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ଏହା କେବଳ କେବଳ (ସାହିତ୍ୟ) ପ୍ରକୃତ ସାମାଜିକ ବା ଅଧିକୃତ ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରେ ।

ସମସ୍ତ ବିଷୟ ଅଧୁନିକ ସାହିତ୍ୟ; ମନୁଷ୍ୟକୁ ଏକ ଆର୍ଥିକ ଚରଣ ମନୁଷ୍ୟରେ ଉପସ୍ଥାପିତ କରେ । ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ସଂପର୍କରେ ଭାରତୀୟ ଦାର୍ଶନିକମାନଙ୍କର ଅବସ୍ଥା; ଏହାର ପାଶ୍ଚାତ୍ୟ ନୀତିବାଦୀ ଓ ଲୋକୋତ୍ପାଦନା ମାନବଙ୍କ ଚିନ୍ତାକୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ଅଧୁନିକ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଅବସ୍ଥା ବୋଲି ମନେକରେ । ଯୁଗେ ଯୁଗ ଭାରତର ଅଧୁନିକ ଉପନିଷଦ ଚିନ୍ତା-ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧକୁ ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ଉପନିଷଦ ଚିନ୍ତା ମାନବ

ସହ ଭୁଲନା କଲେ, ଏହି ଆଚାରୀ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ହୋଇଯାଏ । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ରକ୍ଷା ମାନଙ୍କର ଗୃହଦାରେ କ୍ରମେ ପାର୍ଥକ୍ୟ କମ୍ ସାଦୃଶ୍ୟ ଦେଖାଯାଏ ।

ଉଦାହରଣ ସ୍ୱରୂପ ନିଜାଲୀ ବିଭୂତିଭୂଷଣ ବଳୋପାଧ୍ୟାୟ କମ୍ ମାନବିକ ବଳୋପାଧ୍ୟାୟଙ୍କର ଉପନ୍ୟାସକୁ; ସମରେଶ ବସୁ, ଦୁଷ୍ଟଦେବ ବୋଷ, କମ୍ ସୁନା ବଳୋପାଧ୍ୟାୟଙ୍କର ଉପନ୍ୟାସ ମହତ ଭୁଲନା କଲେ ଜଣାଯାଏ ଯେ; ମଣିଷର ପ୍ରଭବିଷ୍ଣୁ ଯେପରି ଅଧୁନିକତାର ଉଦ୍‌ଭ୍ରାନ୍ତି ଓ ନୈରାଶ୍ୟରେ ଯାନ୍ତି । ଏହି ଉଦ୍‌ଭ୍ରାନ୍ତି ହୋଇପାରେ ସାମାଜିକ କମ୍ ଅର୍ଥନୀତିକ । ଏହି କ୍ରମରେ ମଣିଷ ତାଙ୍କ ଅସାଧାରଣ ଓ ପରିପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣତାକୁ ହରାଇ ବସେ । ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ଲେଖକ ମାନଙ୍କର ଉପନ୍ୟାସ; ଯଥା—‘ପଥେର ପାଞ୍ଚାଲ’, ‘ପଦ୍ମାବତୀ’ ମଝି ପ୍ରଭୃତିରେ ଗାମିଣୀ ପୃଷ୍ଠଭୂମି; ଏକ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନସ୍ଥିତି, ସ୍ୱାଧୀନ ଅଧର୍ମ ସହ ଅଭିଭାବିତ ଭାବରେ ଜଡ଼ିତ । ତେଣୁ ଏହି ଦୃଷ୍ଟିକୋଣ ଜୀବନ-ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧର ଧାରା । ଏହି ଦୃଷ୍ଟିକୋଣ ପୋଷ୍ଟି ଜଗତର ମମତା ଦୁଃଖ ଦୁର୍ଦ୍ଦଶା ମତ୍ତେ ଚରିତ୍ରରେ ସାମର୍ଥ୍ୟ ପ୍ରକାଶ ପାଏ ଏବଂ ଚରିତ୍ର ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ସିମ୍ପୁଲୀ (ସରଳାତ୍ମକ) ହୋଇଯାନ୍ତି । ବିଭୂତିଭୂଷଣ ବଳୋପାଧ୍ୟାୟଙ୍କର ‘ଆମ୍ଭ ଚରିତ୍ର’ ମଧ୍ୟ ସମସ୍ତ ନୌଯୁଗୀୟ ‘ବନ ପଞ୍ଚାଶତ, ପଦାବଳୀ’ ଓ ଚରିତ୍ର ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଭୁଲନା କଲେ ଦେଖାଯାଏ; ଗ୍ରାମ୍ୟ ପରିବେଶ ଯେପରି ଅଧୁନିକତାର ଧୂମାନ୍ତର ଖଣ୍ଡିତ ହୋଇ ଗସ୍ତ ହୋଇପଡ଼ିଛି । ମତ୍ତେ ଚରିତ୍ର ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ମାନବିକତାକୁ ହରାଇ ବସିଛନ୍ତି । ତୁଳନା ସେହି ମାନବିକତା ବା ନୈନେସ କେମିତି ‘The sense of glory’ କୁ ହରାଇବାକୁ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଉନ୍ନତ କଳାର ପରିଣତ ।

ମାନବିକ ଅବସ୍ଥା ଉପରେ ଗୁରୁତ୍ୱ ଅନ୍ୟେକ କଲ ବେଳେ ଲବେନ୍‌ସ ସ୍ପେନ୍ସ ମନେ ପଡ଼ନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କ ମତରେ; “It is the way our sympathy flows and recoils that really determines our lives. And here lies the vast importance of the novel, properly handled. It can inform and lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness and it can lead our sympathy away in recoil from things gone dead.”

ଲବେନ୍‌ସ ଦେଖିଛନ୍ତି; ବିଜ୍ଞାନ ଓ ଶିଳ୍ପ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ସ କ୍ରମେ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଜୀବନ ଆଜି କପରି ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ବେବାରେ ଲାଗିଛି । ଏହା ଏକ ଅସାଧାରଣ ଏପରି ଏକ ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ ପରିବେଶ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିଛି; ମତ୍ତେ ସୁନ୍ଦର, ସହସ୍ପୃହ ଓ ଦୁର୍ବାର ଜୀବନାଶଙ୍କୁ ବିନିମୟରେ ପଲ୍ଲବିତା, ସ୍ତୁଳ ଲବ୍ଧିପ୍ରାପ୍ତିତା ତାର ପୌନ ପୌନିକତାକୁ ସ୍ଥାନପାଲାଇଛି । ବସ୍ତୁତଃ ସାଧାରଣ ମଣିଷ ଗୁଡ଼ାଏ ଦୈନିକ ପ୍ରକୃତିର ସୌକର୍ଯ୍ୟ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ବଞ୍ଚିବାର ଅଳ୍ପାଂଶ ପୋଷଣ କରିଛି । ତେଣୁ ସମସ୍ତ ମାଧୁର୍ଯ୍ୟ, ଆଲୋକ (ସୌକୁମାରୀୟ) ସ୍ଥାନରେ ଦେଖାଦେଇଛି ହିଂସ୍ରତା, ପାଶବିକତା, ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦୟତା ଏବଂ କ୍ଷଣକାଳୀୟ ଆନନ୍ଦାଭିଗତତା । ମଣିଷର ଆଦେଶ ପ୍ରବନ୍ଧତା କ୍ରମେ ମନୋବିକଳ ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଛି ଏବଂ ତା’ର ପ୍ରଭବିଷ୍ଣୁ କ୍ରମେ ବିକୃତ ହେବାରେ ଲାଗିଛି ।

କାରଣ ଏକ ବିଶିଷ୍ଟ ଦିଗରେ (ଅନୁଭୂତିରେ) ମନରହି ଯେ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱର ମର୍ମାନ୍ତ କରି ଚାଲିଛି । ଆମେ ତାକୁ ଏକ ସାଧାରଣ ମଣିଷ କମ୍ ମୃତ୍ୟୁ-ସ୍ଥାନ (ବିକୃତ) ମଣିଷ—ଯାହା କହୁନା କାହିଁକି, ତା’ର ଏହି ବିକୃତ ଏକ ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ ପରିବେଶରୁ ଉଦ୍‌ଗତ । ଯେଉଁ ପରି ଦେଶକୁ ଆମେ ଜାଣୁ (death-in-life) ଅବସ୍ଥା ବୋଲି ଅବହତ କରୁ । ମଣିଷର ଆତ୍ମିକ ଅବସ୍ଥା କ୍ରମେ କ୍ଷୀଣ ହୋଇଗଲେ; ତା’ର ଚରିତ୍ରକୁ କଳ୍ପନା କରିବା ଶ୍ରେୟ କଷ୍ଟପାତ୍ର ହୋଇପଡ଼େ । ଅନ୍ତତଃ ଲବେନ୍‌ସ, ଫଗୋର କମ୍ ଟଲଷ୍ଟୋଏ ତାହାକୁ (ଉପସ୍ଥାପନା) ଭାବରେ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ବସ୍ତୁତଃ ଅନ୍ତତଃ ଚରିତ୍ର ଏକ ଶକ୍ତିର ପରସ୍ପର ଅଙ୍ଗ ଗାଁ ଭାବରେ ଗଢ଼ି କରୁଥିଲେ । କାରଣ ଯେତେବେଳେ ମଣିଷର ଗାନ୍ଧାରୀ, ଆତ୍ମିକ, ମାନବିକ ଓ ନୈତିକ ଗୁଣ ସବୁ ତାର ମମତା ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱକୁ ଅଭାବ ଭାବରେ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରୁଥିଲେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଅନ୍ୟମଧ୍ୟରେ ବିଦ୍ରୁତି ଅଧୁନିକ ମଧ୍ୟତା ଓ ଚର୍ଚ୍ଚିତ୍ର ଉଦ୍‌ଗତ ନୈରାଶ୍ୟବୋଧ; ମଣିଷର ଅନ୍ତର୍ଜୀବନଠାରୁ ବାହ୍ୟ ଜୀବନକୁ ପୃଥକ କରିଦେଇଛି । ଅନ୍ତତଃ ମୁଁ, ଆଲ୍‌ଭର ଡବ୍‌ଲିଉ, ମଝିରେ, ପ୍ରଭବିଷ୍ଣୁ ମଣିଷକୁ ଏହିପରି (ଉପସ୍ଥାପନା) ଭାବରେ ଅନୁଧ୍ୟାନ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଏହା ମହତ ମଣିଷର ନିଜସ୍ୱ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱର ପ୍ରାଧାନ୍ୟ କ୍ରମେ ଗୁଡ଼ାଏ ମୂଖ୍ୟ (ବିକୃତ) ବା ଅବିଚାରୀ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଲୁଚିଯିବ ହେବା ମତ୍ତେ ତା’ର ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱର ଭୂମିକା ବହୁବିଧ ହୋଇପଡ଼ିଛି । ଯେତେବେଳେ ଯେ; ଦୈନିକ, ନୈତିକ, ସାମାଜିକ, ଅର୍ଥନୀତିକ ଓ ସ୍ୱଜନାତ୍ମକ ପ୍ରଭବ

କୁମ୍ଭିକାରେ ନିଜକୁ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରୁଛି; ଏହି ବହୁବିଧ ପ୍ରକାଶରୂପୀ ହାରା ତା'ର ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ବକୁ ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧେକ ଅପ୍ରକାଶିତ ରହିଯାଇଛି । ଏପରି ମଣିଷ ମାନଙ୍କର ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ବ କ୍ରମେ ଦ୍ବିବିଧ ହେବା ସଙ୍ଗେ ସଙ୍ଗେ ଭୟଭୀତ ଓ ଦୁର୍ବଳ ହେବାରେ ଲାଗିଛି ।

ମଣିଷର ସ୍ଥିତି କ୍ରମେ ଲୁପ୍ତ ହୋଇପଡ଼ିବା ସଙ୍ଗେ ମଙ୍ଗେ ତା'ର ସମୀକ୍ଷା ହୋଇଯାଉନାହିଁ । ତା'ର ସମସ୍ତ ବାସ୍ତବିକତା; ସ୍ବାୟ 'ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି-ସଂପର୍କ' ର ବାସ୍ତବତାକୁ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଅସମ୍ଭବ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରୁଛି । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ଏହାକୁ ଲରେନ୍ସ "ଅନ୍ତଃସଂଗତତା" ବା (interrelatedness) ବୋଲି ଅଭିହିତ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଏହା କେବଳ ସ୍ବାଧିବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ବ; ଯେକି ତା'ର ସମସ୍ତ ନୈତିକ ଓ ମନସିକ ପ୍ରବାହରେ ମନୁଲିତ ହୋଇ କୌଣସି ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟଯୋଗ୍ୟ ଅଭିନୟ କରିପାରେ । ସ୍ବାତନ୍ତ୍ର ସାହଚର୍ଯ୍ୟରେ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଚରଣ ଅବସ୍ଥାବଳୀୟ ହୋଇପାରେ । ଅନ୍ୟପାର୍ଶ୍ବରେ, ଆଧୁନିକତାର ଆଦର୍ଶିତ ପ୍ରଭାବକୁ ମଣିଷ ଜୀବନକୁ ଆଜି ସ୍ବୟଂଭୂତ (ଆତ୍ମଜୀବୀ) କରି ଦେଇଛି । ଫଳରେ ସେ Ortega Gasset କିମ୍ବା (mass man) 'ମାସ୍ ମ୍ୟାନ-ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି' (ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ବରେ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧର ପ୍ରଭାବମାନ) ହୋଇପଡ଼ିଛି । ଏବଂ ତା'ର ଅବେଶ ପ୍ରବଣତା, ଆନୁଗିକ ଜୀବନ ପ୍ରବାହ; ଅବଶ୍ୟାସ୍ୟ ଭାବରେ ଶୀଘ୍ର ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିବା ସଙ୍ଗେ ମଙ୍ଗେ ନାନା ଧାରା ଉପଧାର (ମ୍ୟୁଲ୍ଟିପଲ) ରେ ବିଭକ୍ତ ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଛି । ଏହାର ପରିଣତ ସ୍ବରୂପ କଳାର ମାନବୀକରଣ ହୋଇପାରିନାହିଁ ।

ଜୀବନର ଗଭୀରତା ଓ ତା'ର ବୈଚିତ୍ର୍ୟକୁ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ କରିବା ଉପନୟାନର ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ । କିନ୍ତୁ ମଣିଷ ପ୍ରତିଛବି କ୍ରମେ ସଙ୍କୁଚିତ ଓ ଦୟନୀୟ ହୋଇ ଯୋଡ଼ୁଥିବା ଯୋଗୁ; ଏହି ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ଅସମ୍ଭବ ହେଇଯାଇଛି । ସ୍ବାତନ୍ତ୍ର ଆଧୁନିକ ମାହିତ୍ୟ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣତା ଆଲୋଚନା-ବାସ୍ତବ ହେବା ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତେ ନୈରାଶ୍ୟ-ପୀଡ଼ିତ ହୁଏ । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ଏହି ଧାରଣା କେବଳ ପାଶ୍ଚାତ୍ୟମାହିତ୍ୟରେ ମାତ୍ର ନୁହେଁ । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନକାଳୀନ ମନୁଷ୍ୟକୁ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବଙ୍ଗଳା-ଉପନୟାନର ପରମ୍ପରାକୁ ଆଲୋଚନା କଲେ, ଆମେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଏହି କଥା ଅନୁଭବ କରୁ । ଏହି ପରମ୍ପରା ଓ ତା'ର କ୍ରମୋଦ୍ଭବ ପରିପ୍ରେକ୍ଷୀରେ ପ୍ରାୟ ଅଧିକାଂଶ ବଙ୍ଗଳା ଉପନୟାନର ଚରିତ୍ର ମାନେ କ୍ରମେ ସଙ୍କୁଚିତ ହୋଇଯାନ୍ତି । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ଏହାର ପୃଷ୍ଠଭୂମି ଗ୍ରାମୀଣ । ଗ୍ରାମପଦ ଲୋଧିଗାଳିର ଉପନୟାନର ପରିପ୍ରେକ୍ଷୀର ପୃଷ୍ଠଭୂମି ପରିଚିତ ହୋଇପାରିଛି । ଏହାର ଚରଣଭାଷ ସ୍ବରୂପ ବିମଳ ମିଶ୍ରଙ୍କର "କିଛି ଦିଏ କିନ୍ତୁ ନାହିଁ" ଭଳି ଏକ ଦଳିତ ଉପନୟାନକୁ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିପାରି ପାରେ । ଚରଣ ବିଧି ଜୀବନର ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନକୁ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରେ; ଏହା "ନୁହେଁ ହୁଏ" ଏହି ବିବର୍ତ୍ତନକୁ ଅବଶ୍ୟ ଲରେନ୍ସ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନଶୀଳ ଅସ୍ଥିତା (stable ego) ବୋଲି କୁହନ୍ତି ।

ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କର ଚରଣ ମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ; ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ, ସୁ, ଦାସକର ପ୍ରଭୃତି ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ଚରଣ । ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କ ହାରା ବଙ୍ଗଳା-ଉପନୟାନର ପରମ୍ପରା ବିଧି ସମନ୍ୱିତ ହୋଇଛି; ତାହା ଏହି ଚରିତ୍ରମାନଙ୍କ ହାରା ସୂଚକ ହୋଇଥାଏ । ଏହି ବାସ୍ତବ ମାଧ୍ୟମ କଲବେଳେ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ କୁଶଳୀ-କଳାକାର ଭଳି; ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ର; ପରମ୍ପରା ଓ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିକ ପ୍ରଭାବ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଥିବା ଯୋଗତ୍ବକୁ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଠିକ୍ ଯେହି ସମୟରେ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନକାଳୀନ ବଙ୍ଗଳା-ଉପନୟାନରେ ପ୍ରାଚୀନ-ପରମ୍ପରା ମୁଖ୍ୟ ହୋଇଥାଏ । ସେ ହୁଏତ ଐତିହାସିକ ଓ ସୋସାଲ୍ ପରିସ୍ଥିତିରେ ଗଢ଼ିତା କରୁଥାନ୍ତି । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନକାଳୀନ ପରମ୍ପରା କିନ୍ତୁ, ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ଆଧାର ନଥିଲା । ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ୧୯୨୩ ମସିହାରେ ପ୍ରେମିତେନ୍ସ କଲେଜସ୍ଥ ବଙ୍ଗଳା ଚଳ୍ୟ ମମାନରେ ଗ୍ରହଣ ଦେଲେବୋ ଏହି (ଉପରେକ୍ତ) କଥା ସ୍ପଷ୍ଟ ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲା । ଯେଉଁ ଅଭିଭାଷଣରେ ମେ ଡବ୍ଲୁ ଟା ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନକାଳୀନ ଶୁଣି ଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ଅହିତ କରିଥିଲେ । ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କ ଚରଣ ମାନଙ୍କ ଅନ୍ତଃ-ଜୀବନ ସହିତ ନିମିତ୍ତସ୍ଥ, ସ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ; ତାଙ୍କୁ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନକାଳୀନ ପରମ୍ପରା ଠାରୁ ପୃଥକ କଲେ । ଅନ୍ୟ ଗୋଟିଏ ଅଭିଭାଷଣରେ ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ତାଙ୍କର ନିମାତ୍ମକ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୂପୀ ବିଷୟରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆଲୋଚନା କରିଥିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କ ମତରେ; କେତେକ ଅବସ୍ଥାବଳୀୟ ଚରଣ ମାନଙ୍କ ହାରା ସେ ଗ୍ରସ୍ତ ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ଯେହି ଚରଣ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ମନିଷ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ପରିବେଶ (ସଂସ୍ଥା) ମାନ ଉଦ୍ଭାବନ କରୁଥିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କ ପ୍ରବନ୍ଧ 'The revolt of youth' ରେ ତାଙ୍କ ଉପନୟାନର ଆଧ୍ୟାତ୍ମିକ ବସ୍ତୁମାନଙ୍କ ବିଷୟରେ ସେ ଆଲୋଚନା କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଯେଉଁଥିରେକି ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଜୀବନ, ପରିବାର, ମମାନ, ଦୁଃଖ ଦୁର୍ଦ୍ଦଶା ଇତ୍ୟାଦି, ହୃଦୟ-ବିଦାରକ ବିଶ୍ବର ଦୀନତାର ଉଦ୍ଭାସ ପ୍ରଭୃତି ସନ୍ଦିଗ୍ଧତା ।

ତାଙ୍କ ମତରେ ଏହି ଅନୁଭୂତି ସବୁ ପ୍ରକାଶ କଲବେଳେ କିଛି ମମାଧୀନ ନ ହୋଇ; ମେ କେବଳ ସମସ୍ୟାମାନ

ମୁଖ୍ୟ କରନ୍ତି । ପ୍ରତିଯୋଗୀ ମନୋଧାରୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ମର୍ମସ୍ପର୍ଶୀ, କାରଣ ଏଥିରେ ମନୋବେଶିତ ଚରଣ ଗୁଡ଼ିକ, ଆମ ସ୍ମୃତିରେ ଏକ ଚରଣାୟା ପ୍ରଭାବ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରନ୍ତି । ଏହି ପ୍ରଭାବ ‘ଧର୍ମ ସମାଜ’ ଓ ‘ବନପକ୍ଷୀଗାର ପଦାବଳୀ’ ପୁସ୍ତକର ପରସ୍ପର ବିରୋଧାତ୍ମକ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିକୋଣରୁ ହିଁ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟକରୀୟା । ଅନ୍ୟପକ୍ଷରେ ‘ଧର୍ମସମାଜ’ରେ ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଏକ ଏକ ସମାଜ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିଛନ୍ତି; ଯାହା ଅଳ୍ପ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ଓ ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ପରମ୍ପରା-ପାତିତ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏହା ନିଶ୍ଚିତ ଭାବରେ ବିବର୍ତ୍ତନଶୀଳ । ଏହି ଗ୍ରାମ୍ୟ ପରିବେଶ ରମେଶର ଅଭିନୟ ପାଇଁ ଏକ ପୃଷ୍ଠଭୂମି ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ କରିଛି । ପୁଣି ଯେଉଁ ରମେଶ; ଅଜ୍ଞତା, ସଂଜ୍ଞାଶୂନ୍ୟତା, ଅସଦ୍‌ବିଚାର, ମିଥ୍ୟାବୁଦ୍ଧି, ଜାତିବାଦ, ବାଲ୍ୟ ବିବାହ ପ୍ରଭୃତି ଭଳି ପକ୍ଷିକତା ହାରା ପ୍ରଚାରୁତ ଲୋଲଯାଇଛି । ଶାନ୍ତ, ମୈତ୍ରୀ ଓ ଗ୍ରାମ୍ୟ ଜୀବନର ଆହ୍ଲାଦ ପ୍ରତି ତା’ର ଥିବା ଧାରଣା କ୍ରମେ ଧୂସ ପାଇଛି । ଏହି ସବୁ ନିଃସାରତା ବିରୁଦ୍ଧରେ ପ୍ରତିବାଦ କରିବା ପାଇଁ କେବଳ ବିରୋଧୀର ଅନ୍ତର୍ଦ୍ଧୃଷ୍ଟି ହିଁ ତାର ଆଖି ଖୋଲି ଦେଇଛି । ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଦୁର୍ଦ୍ଦଶା ଅନ୍ତତଃ ଏବଂ ଏହାର ବିନିମୟରେ ସେମାନେ ହୁଅନ୍ତି ଅସରନ୍ତି ଅନୁକମ୍ପାର ପାତ୍ର । ଅନ୍ୟପକ୍ଷରେ ‘ବନପକ୍ଷୀଗାର ପଦାବଳୀ’ରେ, ଆଧୁନିକତାର ପ୍ରଭାବ କେବଳ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଗ୍ରାମ୍ୟ ଜୀବନକୁ କଳ୍ପିତ କାହିଁକି ଅପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ରଖିଛି । ଏହା କେବଳ ଗ୍ରାମ୍ୟ-ପୃଷ୍ଠଭୂମି ଓ ତା’ର ଅବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥାକୁ ପରିଶୋଧିତ; ଯେଉଁଠାରେ ଜାନ୍ତିକାରୀ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱ; ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ଇଚ୍ଛାର ନିୟାମକ ହୋଇପଡ଼େ । ମଣିଷର ଅସ୍ଥିତା (Ego) ରକ୍ଷା ନେଇକି ଓ ମାନସିକ ଦଗରୁ ନିଃସଙ୍ଗ ହୋଇପଡ଼ୁଥିବା ଯୋଗୁ କ୍ରମେ ସଂକ୍ରମଣଶୀଳ (କ୍ରମବର୍ଦ୍ଧିଷ୍ଣୁ) ହୋଇଯାଏ । ଏହା ଅବଶ୍ୟ ଆଧୁନିକ ଜୀବନର ଏକ ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟୋଗ୍ୟ ପ୍ରକ୍ରିୟା । ଯାହାର ପରିଣତି ସ୍ୱରୂପ ଏହା ମଣିଷକୁ ଗୁଡ଼ାଏ ପାଗଳାମିର ଲଙ୍ଘନରେ ହିଁ ପରିଣତ କରେ ।

“ସମାଜ-ଧର୍ମର ମୂଲ୍ୟ” ପ୍ରବନ୍ଧରେ ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥିତ ସମାଜର ମୂଲ୍ୟବୋଧ ଉପରେ ଗୁରୁତ୍ୱ ଆସେଇ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ପୁଣି ଯେଉଁ ମୂଲ୍ୟବୋଧ; ଉଭୟ ଚରଣ ଓ ଅଭିନୟରେ ଥିବା ସରସତା ଓ ନୀତିଶୈଳୀର ସମନ୍ୱୟ ସାଧନ କରି, ଜୀବନର ଏକ ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ବିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଦିଏ । ଏହି ଗ୍ରାମ୍ୟ-ସମାଜକୁ ସେ ଏକ ଚରଣ-ସ୍ୱର୍ଗ (Idyllic Eden) ବୋଲି ମନେ କରି ନାହାନ୍ତି । ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଆମେ ଯେତେବେଳେ ‘ଗୁଡ଼ାଦାନ’ରେ ‘ମୃଗାଳ’ ଭଳି ଚରଣକୁ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧିତ କରୁ; ତା’ର ଜୀବନଶୈଳୀର ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନାହିଁ ଆମ ସଂବେଦନଶୀଳତାକୁ ପ୍ରଭାବିତ କରେ । ସେହି ପ୍ରଭାବ ହୁଏତ ଆମ ଦେଶର ‘ଗୁରୁତ୍ୱ-ସଂସ୍କୃତି’ରୁ ଉଦ୍ଧୃତ । ମୂଳତଃ ଠିକ୍ ଅଟେ, କିନ୍ତୁ ସେ ଜୀବନ ଇନ୍ଦ୍ରିୟାବିଶେଷତାରେ ବିଚଳିତ ହୁଏନାହିଁ । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ଅଟେ ତାର ମମତା (ମାନସିକ) ଜଟିଳତା ସତ୍ତ୍ୱେ ଏକ ଦୁର୍ବଳ ଚରଣା ହୁଏତ ଠିକ୍ ମୃଗାଳର ବିରୋଧାତ୍ମକ । ଯେତେବେଳେ ଅଟଳାର ମିତ୍ରା କେଦାରବାବୁ, ମହିମର ଗ୍ରାମ ପରିଦର୍ଶନ କରିଛନ୍ତି ଓ ମୃଗାଳକୁ ବେଶିଛନ୍ତି; ସେ ଏହି ଗ୍ରାମ୍ୟ-ଜୀବନର ମାର୍ଥ୍ୟ (ମାନ୍ୟତା) ଏବଂ କଲିକତା ଓ ଏହି ଗ୍ରାମ୍ୟ-ଜୀବନ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଥିବା ବିରୋଧାତ୍ମକତାକୁ ଅନୁଭବ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ସେ ସ୍ପଷ୍ଟ ଭାବରେ ଦେଖିଛନ୍ତି; ଯଦିଓ ଏହି ଗ୍ରାମ୍ୟାସୀମାନେ ଅସ୍ଥିତି ତଥାପି ସେମାନେ ଅଜ୍ଞ ହୁଅନ୍ତି । ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ମଧ୍ୟତାର ମାନବତ୍ୱ ତାଙ୍କର ଅସ୍ଥିତାଗତ ହୋଇଯାଇଛି ।

‘ଅଟଳା’ ଠିକ୍ ଏକ ଅନୌଲ୍ଲିଖିତ ଚରଣ ଭଳି ମନେହୁଏ । ସେ ଦୂର ପୃଥକ ପୃଥକରେ (ମାନସିକ ଦୃନ୍ଦୁମଧ୍ୟରେ) ଥାଇ ନେଇକି ପ୍ରତି ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧ ବିଶ୍ୱାସୀ ହୋଇପଡ଼େ । ସେଥିମଧ୍ୟରୁ ଗୋଟିଏ ପୃଥକ ମୁତପ୍ରାୟ ଅନ୍ୟତ୍ର ଗର୍ବ କୋଷରେ ପାତ୍ର । ଏହିଭଳି ହୁଏ; ‘ଦୁଇ’ ପ୍ରଭୃତି ଭଳି ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କ ଅନେକ ସାହିତ୍ୟକୃତିରେ ପ୍ରତିଫଳିତ ହୋଇଥାଏ । ବିଳାସବିହୀନ ଏବଂ ସ୍ୱାମିବିହୀନ ପ୍ରଭୃତିକ ହାରା ଉପନ୍ନ ହୋଇଥିବା କଳ୍ପିତ ଗ୍ରାମ୍ୟ-ପରିବେଶକୁ ନିୟନ୍ତ୍ରଣ କରିବା ‘ବିଜୟା’ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧିତ ହୁଏ । ତା’ର ନେତୃକ ଚରଣର ସାମର୍ଥ୍ୟହିଁ ମିତ୍ରା ଓ ପୁଣି ମିଳିତ ଚଳାନ୍ତକୁ ନିଷ୍ଠା କରିଦେବା ପାଇଁ ସମର୍ଥ ହୁଏ । ଏବଂ ନରେନ୍ଦ୍ର ସନ୍ତୋଷିତା ଲଭ କରି ତାର ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଗତ ଜୀବନ ବିକଶିତ ହୁଏ । ଏକ ବୌଦ୍ଧିକ ସଂପର୍କ ପାଇଁ ସ୍ୱାମିବିହୀନ ଯେତେବେଳେ ‘ବିଜୟା’କୁ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧ କରାଇବା ପାଇଁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରିଛନ୍ତି; ସେ କିନ୍ତୁ ଚତୁରତା ମତ୍ତ ଜୀବନଜଟିଳତାକୁ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧିତ ହୋଇଛି; ତାହା ବିଜୟାର ଭୂମିକାରୁ ଜଣାପଡ଼େ ।

ଗ୍ରାମ୍ୟ କଥା ମନସ୍ତା ପୃଷ୍ଠଭୂମି,—ଯାହା ଦେଉଳା କାହିଁକି; ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କ ଉପନ୍ୟାସ ମାନଙ୍କର ମୁଖ୍ୟ ଉପାଦାନ ହେଲା ଆବେଗ-ମନୁହତ ନିଜକ ପ୍ରକାଶ । କାରଣ ହୃଦୟର ଭାଷା ମସ୍ତିଷ୍କର ଭାଷା ଅପେକ୍ଷା ଅଧିକ ପ୍ରଭାବଶାଳୀ । ଏହି ପରିପ୍ରକାଶ ହିଁ କୌଣସି





ରହିଛି । ଏମାନେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଜଗଜ୍ଞ, କିଠୋର ସମାଜ ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥାର ହିଁ ଶିକାର ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି । ଏହାଠାରୁ ଆହୁରି ବେଶୀ ସେମାନେ; ମଣିଷର ହୃଦୟସ୍ଥାନରେ ହିଁ ପାଉଁଶ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ର, ଜୋଲ ଓ ଡକ୍ଟରଙ୍କ ପ୍ରଭୃତିଙ୍କ ଭଳି ନିଜକୁ କେବଳ ସମାଜ-ବାସ୍ତବତା (Social realism) ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସୀମିତ ରଖିନାହାନ୍ତି । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ବାଲ୍ୟବିବାହ, ବୈଧବ୍ୟ, ଜାତି-ପ୍ରଥା, ବ୍ୟାଧି ଓ ଦାଉରୀୟ ପ୍ରଭୃତି ଭଳି କେତେକ ସମସ୍ୟା ଉପସ୍ଥାପନ କଲେବେଳେ; ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଭଳି ଶତ୍ରୁ ବାସ୍ତବବାଦୀ ହୋଇପଡ଼ିଛନ୍ତି । ଉଦାହରଣ ସ୍ୱରୂପ, କରଣସ୍ୱାମୀର ଦାଉରୀୟତା, ଅପରିଚିତ ଗୃହର ସୁନ୍ଦର-ବିଶେଷଣ; ଏହାର ଅନ୍ତର୍ଭୁକ୍ତ ହୋଇପାରେ । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ଏଥିରେ ଏକ ନୈତିକ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିଭଙ୍ଗୀ ରହିଛି । କାରଣ ଏହି ପରିବେଶହିଁ କରଣସ୍ୱାମୀର ଶାଶୁରଙ୍କ ଗୌରବର ପିନ୍ଧି ବସିବାର । ଅନନ୍ତସ୍ୱର ନମ ବିକାଶ ସଙ୍ଗେ ମଙ୍ଗେ, ପାଟକ, ନୈତିକ ସମସ୍ୟା, ଶାଶୁରଙ୍କ ଗୌରବ ଓ ଆତ୍ମିକ ଗୌରବର ବିରୋଧତା, ପରିଣତିରେ ବିଷୟବସ୍ତୁର ବିସ୍ମୟ— ପ୍ରଭୃତି ବିଷୟରେ ଆମେ ମତେ ନ ହୋଇପାରୁ । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ନିରନ୍ତରତାକୁ ବିକଶିତ କଲେବେଳେ, ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ସବୁବେଳେ ମନ ପରିମାଣରେ ପ୍ରଭାବଶାଳୀ ହୁଏ । ଉଦାହରଣ ସ୍ୱରୂପ ମଙ୍ଗେ, କରଣସ୍ୱାମୀ ଓ ଅଚଳା ପ୍ରଭୃତି ଚରିତ୍ରରେ ଆସିଥିବା ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ, ମନୁଷ୍ୟରେ ପ୍ରଭାବଶାଳୀ ପୁଷ୍ପବୃକ୍ତି ଦ୍ୱାରା ମନସ୍ଥ ହୁଏ । ପୁଣି ସମସ୍ତେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଶାନ୍ତଚିତ୍ତ ଅତି ଦୟାଳୁ ଭାବରେ ଭାବପ୍ରବଣ; ଠିକ ଡକ୍ଟରଙ୍କ ଭଳି । ‘ନରନ ମାନ’ ଓ ‘ସୁଧା ଦା’ ରେ ଉପେନ୍ଦ୍ର ଓ ମାଧବର ମୃତ୍ୟୁ (ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନା), ଅପ୍ରାପ୍ତକ ଭାବରେ ଭାବପ୍ରବଣ ଭେଦ ରୁଚିତ । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ଏହି ରୁଚିତତା ସାମୟିକ । କାରଣ ଜୀବନ ପ୍ରତି ତାଙ୍କର ଦୃଷ୍ଟିଭଙ୍ଗୀ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ମାନଙ୍କର ପରିପକ୍ୱତାରେ ହିଁ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ । ଏବଂ ଏହି ପରିପକ୍ୱତା, ଧ୍ୟାନ-ବୃତ୍ତିମତର ପୁଷ୍ପବୃକ୍ତି ଉପରେ ହିଁ ଆଧାରିତ । ଏହି ବୃତ୍ତିମତର ନିରାପତ୍ତି ଏକ ସଫଳତାଶାଳୀ ମହାବୃତ୍ତି ଦ୍ୱାରା ଦେଖାଯାଏ । ଯାହା ଦୁଃଖପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ (tragedy) ର ଲକ୍ଷଣ ଶୀଘ୍ର ଦେଖାଯାଏ । ଉଦାହରଣ ସ୍ୱରୂପ ‘ବାମନେ ମେସେ’ ରେ; ଏକ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ପରିଣତି ହେବା ପାଇଁ ବାଧ୍ୟତା ହୋଇଥିବା ସଂଘା, ବିବାହ-ବେଦୀରୁ ପରିତ୍ୟାଗ କରି ଅରୁଣାକୁ ବିବାହ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ । ପୁଣି ଅରୁଣା ଯଦାସିନିତ ଦ୍ୱାରା ହିଁ ସେ ନିଜର ଅନ୍ତର୍ନିହିତ ଦୁର୍ବଳତାକୁ ଅନୁଭବ କରିବା ସଙ୍ଗେ ସଙ୍ଗେ ପରିତ୍ୟକ୍ତ ଭାବରେ ଅରୁଣାକୁ ଛାଡ଼ିବା ପାଇଁ ବାଧ୍ୟ ହୁଏ । ପରେ ପରେ ଯେତେବେଳେ ଅରୁଣା ତାକୁ ବିବାହ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଫଳ ମାଗିବା ଦେଖାଏ; ସଂଘା କିନ୍ତୁ ଏହି ଆବେଦନକୁ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଗୌରବାର୍ତ୍ତ ଭାବରେ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟାଖ୍ୟାନ କରେ । ଜୀବନ ପ୍ରତି ଏହାହିଁ ଏକ ପରିପକ୍ୱ ପ୍ରତିକ୍ରିୟା । ଏହାକୁ କେତେକ ଲେଖକମାନେ ଉପନ୍ୟାସମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟ ମଧ୍ୟ ଭୂମିକା କରିବା ଉଚିତ । ଯେଉଁଠାରେ, ଏଭଳି ଏକ ପରିସ୍ଥିତି; ହୁଏତ ଆଧ୍ୟାତ୍ମିକ ନିଷ୍ଠା କିମ୍ବା ଆଧ୍ୟାତ୍ମିକତା ବୃତ୍ତିମତରେ ହିଁ ସମାହିତ ହୋଇଥାନ୍ତା ।

ଯେତେବେଳେ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଦର୍ଶାଏ; ମଣିଷର ବ୍ୟବହାର ଗୁଡ଼ାଏ ଭାବ ପ୍ରକାଶ କିମ୍ବା ନିରାଶରାକୁ ହିଁ ଜନ୍ମ ଦେଇ । ଏବଂ ଅଧିକାଂଶ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଉପନ୍ୟାସ ପରି ଏହା ଏକ ରୁଚ୍ଛ-ପ୍ରକାଶରୂପୀ ନିୟମକ ହୁଏ । George Lukacs କି ଭାଷାରେ ଏପରିକି, ସମାଜ-ବାସ୍ତବତା-ସଂପର୍କିତ ଉପନ୍ୟାସ ମାନେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଏହି (ଉପରେକ୍ତ) ଦୃଷ୍ଟିକୋଣରୁ ମୁକ୍ତ ନୁହେଁ । ଆମର ଚୌଧୁରୀଙ୍କର “ସାତାଲେ ଏକ ଲୁହ” ଏହାର ଉଦାହରଣ ହୋଇପାରେ । ଅନ୍ୟପକ୍ଷରେ ଜୀବନର ଆହ୍ୱାନକୁ ସମ୍ମୁଖୀନ ହେବାପାଇଁ ଚରିତ୍ରର ସାମର୍ଥ୍ୟ ହିଁ କେବଳ ତାର ଅନ୍ତର୍ନିହିତ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱକୁ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରେ ନାହିଁ; ଏହାର ବିକାଶରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ବିପ୍ଳବର ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଆଣେ । ଏହା ପୁଣି ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟକୁ ଗଭୀର ଭାବରେ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିବା ସଙ୍ଗେ ସଙ୍ଗେ ଜୀବନର ମତରେ;—ଏକ ଦୁର୍ଦ୍ଦିବାର (ଅବିଚଳତା) ମନନଶୀଳତା ଜନ୍ମଦେଇ । ଏହି ପରିପ୍ରେକ୍ଷାରେ ‘ଗୃହଦାହ’ର ସୁରେଶ ଯେତେବେଳେ ଶୟନ କକ୍ଷରେ ପ୍ରବେଶ କରେ; ସେ ନିଜନିଜର, ଶୟନଶାୟୀ ଅଚଳାକୁ ଅବିଷ୍ଟାର କରେ । ସେ ଏହି ଦୃଶ୍ୟକୁ ନିଷ୍ଠୁର ଭାବରେ ଚାହିଁ ଲାଗେ । ପୁଣି ସେ ସ୍ୱାକାର କରନ୍ତି ଯେ ତାର ଏହି ଦୃଷ୍ଟିକୋଣ କୌଣସି ଏକ ନିୟମାବଳୀ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିର ଦୃଷ୍ଟିକୋଣ ସଙ୍ଗେ ସମାନ । ଯେଉଁ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ପ୍ରଭାତ-ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟୋଦୟ-ସ୍ୱାତ ଶିଶିର ବିନ୍ଦୁର ଅପରିମାପ ଗୌରବର ମଧ୍ୟ ଅଧିକରଣ କରି ନେବା ପାଇଁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କଲେ; ପରେ ପରେ ତା’ର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନର ଲମ୍ବାରତ ହୁଏତ ଶୀଘ୍ରକରେ ଧୂଳିସାତ ହୋଇଯାଏ ।

ଏହା ବ୍ୟତୀତ ‘ଦେଶ-ପାଉଣୀ’ ର ଏକ ଦୃଶ୍ୟରେ ଜୀବନାନନ୍ଦ; ଗ୍ରାମରେ ଏକ ଛୋଟ-ଧୋଇ ନିର୍ମାଣ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଚିନ୍ତା କରାଯାଉଛି । ହଠାତ୍ ସେ ଅନୁଭବ କରାଯାଉଛି; ଧୋଇ ନିର୍ମାଣ କରିବାର ମତେନିଜର ଭାବରେ ତାଙ୍କର ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି-ସତ୍ତା ଯେପରି ଭୃବ ଯାଇଛି । ଏହି ମତେନିଜର ଅନ୍ତର କଳା ଓ ଗୌରବର ମାନ ହେଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଗ୍ରାମ୍ୟ-ସମାଜର ଦୁଃଖ ଦୁର୍ଦ୍ଦଶାର ଏକ ଅସାଧାରଣ ପ୍ରକାର ରୂପେ ଦେଖା

ଦେଇଛି । ତେଣୁ ଚରଣ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ମୁକ୍ତ ଭାବରେ ଉପଲବ୍ଧ କରିବା କେବଳ ଉନ୍ନତ କଳାକାର ମାନଙ୍କ ପକ୍ଷେହିଁ ସମ୍ଭବ ହୋଇଥାଏ । ଯେଉଁ ମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଗୁଡ଼ାଏ ଅସଂଲଗ୍ନ ଅନୁଭୂତି କୁ ଅର୍ଥାନ୍ତି ତ ଭାବରେ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ‘କଳା’ ହିଁ ମାଧ୍ୟମ ହୋଇଥାଏ । ଏଭଳି ସ୍ଥଳରେ ଧାର୍ଯ୍ୟବାହକତା (orderly) ରକ୍ଷାକରିବା ହିଁ କଳାର କେନ୍ଦ୍ରସ୍ଥଳ (ମୁଖ୍ୟକଥା) ହୁଏ । ସୂଚକ ଏହି କଳା ; ଅମ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ବକୁ ବ୍ୟର୍ଯ୍ୟସ୍ବ ମୁକ୍ତ ଏବଂ ପରିଚ୍ଛନ୍ନ ଭାବରେ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ସମର୍ଥ ହୁଏ । ବସ୍ତୁତଃ ଜୀବନର ଗଭୀରତାକୁ ସଂହାରୁଥିବା ଭାବରେ ଚିତ୍ରଣ କରିବା ପାଇଁ, ଟାଗୋର ଏବଂ ଛଳଷ୍ଟ୍ରସ୍ବଙ୍କ ଭଳି ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କର ଅସାଧାରଣ ସାମର୍ଥ୍ୟ ଥିଲା, କିନ୍ତୁ ସେହି ସାମର୍ଥ୍ୟ ଆକାଶ ଉପନାୟକରେ ଦେଖାଯାଏ ନାହିଁ । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ବସ୍ତୁର ଭୂମିକା ବନୋପାଧ୍ୟାୟ, ବନମୁକ୍ତ, ବନମ ମିତ୍ର କଥା ଜଗତଙ୍କ ଭଳି ଉପନାୟକ ମାନେ ଏଥିରୁ ବ୍ୟତିରିକ୍ତ ।

ଅଧୁନିକ ବଙ୍ଗାଳୀ ଉପନାୟକ ; ସ୍ବାସ୍ଥୀ ଅଥର ଅବସ୍ଥାଗାୟିକ ଚରଣ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିବାରେ କ୍ଷମକ ପଦାୟକ ହୁଏ । ସୂଚକ ଜୀବନର ମୂଳଭାସ (ଗଭୀରତା) କୁ ସଂହାର କରିବା ପାଇଁ ସମସ୍ତ ହୋଇପାରେ ନାହିଁ । ‘ବିଦଳ’, ‘ଗାନ୍ ଭେରେ’, ‘ଦୁଃଖ’ ପ୍ରଭୃତି ଉପନାୟକ ଅବଶ୍ୟ ଉପରେକ୍ତ ଆବାବକୁ ଦୂର କରିବା ପାଇଁ ହିଁ ଚଳନ୍ତି । ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ, ଏକ ପରିପ୍ରେକ୍ଷାରେ ଆମକୁ ଜୀବନ ବସ୍ତୁରେ ସନ୍ଦେହନ କରିବା ସଙ୍ଗେ ସଙ୍ଗେ ; ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଆମର ପ୍ରଭୃତ ମାନସିକ (ଅନ୍ତଃ) ବ୍ୟର୍ଯ୍ୟସ୍ବକୁ ଉପଲବ୍ଧ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ସମସ୍ତ କରାଇଛନ୍ତି । ବାସ୍ତବିକ ଏହା ଏକ ଅସୁରାଣୀୟ ମତି । ଆମର ମୁଖ୍ୟ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ବର ଗୋଟାଏ ବ୍ୟର୍ଯ୍ୟସ୍ବ । ହୁଏତ ମନିଷକୁ ମଜୁର କରି ଗୁଡ଼ାଏ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକୁ କରାଯାଏ ସଙ୍ଗେ ସମାନ । ଏକ ପରିପ୍ରେକ୍ଷାରେ ‘କେଶ ପ୍ରସାଦେ’ ଲେଖକଙ୍କୁ କମଳା ନମ୍ବୋକ୍ତ ପ୍ରଭୃତି ଏକ ଅବ୍ୟର୍ଯ୍ୟ ସ୍ବ (ଦୁଃଖିକା) ଉଦ୍ବେଗ କରେ ;—“କେଶ ମଂରେ ପୃଥ୍ବୀକୁ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟାଖ୍ୟାନ କରି କମଳା (ଜୀବନ) ଯନ୍ତ୍ରଣା ହୋଇ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଆମର ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହୁଏ । ମନୁ ମୌନର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଓ ଗୋକୁମାରୀଙ୍କୁ ନିକଟ କରି ; ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି-ପ୍ରଭୃତ ସହ ଏକାତ୍ର ଭାବରେ ବସ୍ତୁତା ପାଇଁ ଆମର ଇଚ୍ଛା” । ହୁଏତ ଏହି ଉପଲବ୍ଧ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀ ଏକକ (କେଶକ) Triberne କଥା Tagore କି ପାଖରୁ ଅସିଆଇ ପାରେ । ସେ ଯାହାହେଉ ; ଚେତନାରେ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି-ଗତ ସହ ଲଜ୍ଜିନ (ଏକାତ୍ର) ହୋଇଗଲେ ଏହା ମାନବ ସ୍ଥିତିର ଏକ ଚିତ୍ର ସ୍ବାସ୍ଥୀ ଅଥର ପ୍ରବାଦଗାଳୀ ବ୍ୟବୋଦ୍ଧାସକୁ ଉପଲବ୍ଧ କରେ ଏବଂ ଏହାର ପରିଚ୍ଛନ୍ନ ମଧ୍ୟ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରେ । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ଏହି ପରିଚ୍ଛନ୍ନକୁ ଲରେନ୍ସ ସେରିଙ୍ଗଲ ବାବରେ ଚିନ୍ତା କରିଛନ୍ତି ; ତାହା ସ୍ବର ଉଚ୍ଛ୍ବିତ ରେ ହିଁ ମୁଣ୍ଡି । ଆଜି ଆମପାଇଁ ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କର ଉପଯୋଗିତା ନିଶ୍ଚିତ ଭାବରେ ଲାଭୁଛି । ସପ୍ତର୍ଷି ବସୁନ୍ଦରୀ ବାବରେ ମନିଷ ଜୀବନର ଆବିଷ୍କାର ପରି-ପ୍ରକାଶରେ ଏହା ହିଁ ପ୍ରତିମାଳୟ । ଏହାକୁ ହୁଏତ ସୃଷ୍ଟି ଓ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧ ଜୀବନ ସମୀକ୍ଷା କୁହାଯାଇ ପାରେ । ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କର ଉପନାୟକ ଆମକୁ ଦୟାମୟ ଏବଂ ଅଧ୍ୟାତ୍ମିକ ଜୀବନ ବସ୍ତୁରେ କେବଳ ସନ୍ଦେହନ କରି ଦେବ ନାହିଁ, ବରଂ ଅଧିକ ସମସ୍ତ ଓ ପରିକଳ୍ପିତ ବାବରେ ଉପନାୟକର ଦାୟିତ୍ବ ହିଁ ସମାପନ କରେ । ଲରେନ୍ସଙ୍କ ଭାଷାରେ—“Now here we see the beauty and great value of novel. Philosophy, religion, science, they are, all of them, busy nailing things down to get a stable equilibrium. But the novel, no. The novel is the highest example of the subtle interrelatedness that man has discovered. Everything is true in its own time, place, circumstance and untrue outside of its own time, place, circumstance. If you try to nail anything down in the novel, either it kills the novel or the novel gets up and walks away with the novel.”

ଯେତେବେଳେ କଳାକାର ; ସ୍ବାନ, କାଳ ଓ ମନବେଶ କୁ ଜୟକଲ ଭଳି ଚରଣ ସୃଷ୍ଟିକରେ ; ସେହି ସମୟରେ ହିଁ ମନିଷର ଏହି ସୂକ୍ଷ୍ମ ଅନ୍ତଃ ଗୋପସ୍ବ (interrelatedness) କୁ ଉପଲବ୍ଧ କରି ହୁଏ । ଏବଂ ‘କଳା’ ନମେ ଚିତ୍ରସ୍ବାସ୍ଥୀ ହୋଇଯାଏ ।

ଅନୁବାଦକ : କେ. ପି. ଡାକ୍ତ

# Saratchandra in our times

Bidhubhusan Das

The relevance of literature to life can be gauged from different angles, for example, political, social, historical, economic, philosophical, psychological, etc., and today specialised criticism approaches a literary work from such narrow angles, and in the process, as Allen Tate very acutely observes in his essay *The Man of Letters in the Modern World*, the intrinsic meaning of 'life' is either distorted or lost. On the other hand, a spurious concern for literature, which implies an intelligent and initial study of it, also implies a profound concern with 'life' and this is essentially a moral and spiritual concern. In order to be aware of these dimensions of life we have perforce to be engaged in unravelling the meaning of life itself and recognise the identity of man as a moral and spiritual being. But that meaning of life is very difficult to unfold owing to the progressively attenuated condition of our sensibility under the stress and strain of modern civilization which is dominated by science and technology, and a grossly materialistic view of life. It is these forces of the modern age that have led to a cultural crisis all over the world and the march is in the direction of vulgarity and obscenity, sensationalism and violence—all of which are manifestations of an ethos that is unable to face the deep spiritual reverberations of life—it is the predicament of what Sorokin calls a 'sensate culture' in which the capacity for contemplation and serenity, for enjoying beauty and spiritual values withers. Such an ethos presents man from a scientific viewpoint reducing him into a conglomeration of different processes, or a collocation of atoms.

Modern literature, all over the world, presents man as a fragmented character for whom the total being in the sense in which Indian philosophers postulate it, or even Western philosophy of the idealistic and transcendental type adumbrates it, is very obscure. This phenomenon can be very well observed by comparing the characters in the modern novel, both Indian and Western, with the characters in the older novels and although the degree of destitution of character will vary there will also be striking resemblances. In Bengali fiction, for example, we may take the novels of Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay or Manik Bandopadhyay and compare them with the novels of Samaresh Basu, Buddhadev Bose, or Sunil Gangopadhyay to see what has happened to the image of man who has increasingly become subjected to the distracting forces of modern life, both social and economic, and in the process lost his

uniqueness and wholeness. In the novels of the older writers, say *Pathēr Pāchālī* or *Padmānadīr Mājhi*, the rural background is inseparable from an organic integrated pattern of life, and is, therefore, the source of a positive life giving attitude to life. It is this attitude in the face of all the sorrows and sufferings of this world that gives force and meaning to the character and makes it three dimensional. In contrast to a character like Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay's 'Apu' we may consider the characters in Ramapada Chaudhuri's *Banpalāśir Padūhālī* in which the rural setting is invaded by the destructive forces of modernism for which the characters lose their sense of being, or what Henry James calls 'the sense of glory', which is perhaps the ultimate effect of all great art.

The stress on the human condition reminds us of D. H. Lawrence who said : "It is the way our sympathy flows and recoils that really determines our lives. And here lies the vast importance of the novel, properly handled. It can inform and lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness and it can lead our sympathy away in recoil from things gone dead." Lawrence had witnessed the withering of life under the impact of the forces of modern scientific and industrial civilization. The process of moral and spiritual decay and disintegration has resulted in a cultural pattern in which the subtle, enduring and vital aspects of life yield place to all that is base, coarse, sensational, and trite, and the common man strives to live by a rapid succession of sensations. Thus, the cult of sweetness and light is replaced by violence, brutality, callousness, and an indulgence in ephemeral pleasures. The emotional life of man, therefore, becomes desensitized and shallow and the image of man gets distorted when he is subjected to increasingly specialized interpretations of his personality. He becomes, in the phrase of David Riesman, 'outer directed'. Thus, whether we call him the marginal man or the faceless man, the progressive deterioration of his image is the outcome of a cultural scene that can best be described as death-in-life. Once the self gets diminished it becomes difficult to conceive of character in the sense in which Lawrence, or for that matter, Tagore or Tolstoy conceived it. In the past, character and action went on together, because the physical, spiritual, mental and moral aspects of a human being which constitute his total being were not sundered. On the other hand, with the passage of time the forces of modern civilization, and its discontents, as discerned by Freud or Aldous Huxley or Lewis Mumford, have brought about a severance of the inner life from the outer, the authentic self being hidden behind a series of masks that man has to put on as he enacts his different roles in society. While submitting himself to these roles—biological, historical, social, economic, or political—he becomes a series of gestures only, half of them inarticulate. In such persons the self becomes a dubious entity and the individual becomes a sort of frightened or impotent will. His identity is either undefined or lost and his actions do not enable him to explore the realm of personal relationships or 'inter-relatedness', as Lawrence would have it. It is only the authentic self in all its spiritual and moral ramifications that can enact any significant action and thereby can any character become memorable in literature. On the other hand, the frightening pressures of modern life have reduced man to an automation—he is Ortega Gasset's 'mass man' and his emotional inner life is so much attenuated as to become incredible ; it is revealed in spurts and jets, and art becomes dehumanized in consequence.

If the function of the novel is to explore the depths of life, to show its abundance, that function fails when we conjure up the shrivelled pitiable image of modern man. Modern literature as a whole, therefore, becomes so depressing instead of leaving a sense of exultation. This impression is not confined to Western literature alone. Taking up the tradition of the Bengali novel from Bankimchandra, when we come to the present age the growth of that tradition and its modification can be seen by a reference to the progressive diminution of

character in the majority of Bengali novels, even when the setting is rural, as has already been pointed out with reference to Ramapada Chaudhuri's novel. In contrast, one may refer to a major novel like *Kari Diyē Kinlām* by Bimal Mitra to notice how character can alter life and exhibit what Lawrence called a stable ego. Saratchandra's characters are the ancestors of characters like Lakṣmī, Satī, and Dipankar, and that implies that the tradition of the Bengali novel was really moulded by Saratchandra. In accomplishing this task Saratchandra, like any major artist, explored the relation between tradition and individual talent. The main tradition of the Bengali novel, at that time, was represented by Bankimchandra, who was writing in the historical romantic mode.

That Bankimchandra's tradition was insufficient for Saratchandra is clear from the latter's address to the Bengali Literary Society of the Presidency College in 1923 in which he astutely pointed out the shortcomings of Bankimchandra. The most marked departure from the Bankimchandra tradition is revealed in Saratchandra's increasing concern with the inner life of the characters. In another address Saratchandra discussed his artistic technique and said that he seized upon certain unforgettable characters and devised incidents to put them into action. Further, in 'The Revolt of Youth' he speaks of the substance of his fiction as consisting of the accounts of personal life, family, society, the tales of sorrow and suffering, the histories of heart-rending injustice. In depicting these experiences, he said, he was only posing problems, not offering solutions. The posing of the problems, however, becomes so penetrating because the characters who are engaged in them leaves such a permanent impression on our memory, say, as in *Palli Samāj*, in contrast to *Banpalāśir Padāhalī*. In *Palli-Samāj*, Saratchandra handles a society which is steeped in superstitions, old customs ; it is, nevertheless, a society in transition. This village society furnishes a stage for action by Ramēś who is dazed by the amount of evil there in the shape of ignorance, pettiness, ill will, fraud, casteism, childmarriage, disease, etc. His illusion about the peace and harmony and joy of village life is shattered but for the insights of Biśwēswarī who opens his eyes to the futility of his resentment against them. The suffering of the villagers is endless and in turn they are portrayed as objects of deep compassion. On the other hand, in *Banpalāśir Padābulī*, the forces of modernism have not only degraded the lives of the villagers but made them crude also. This is the result of the gradual disintegration of a communal pattern of life in which the aggressive selfhood is subordinated to the larger common weal. The 'ego' as an aggrandizing element, owing to its isolation, both moral and spiritual, is one of the conspicuous elements of modern life and in its ultimate form it reduces the individual into a set of neurotic gestures. In his essay *Samāj Dharmēr Mūlya*, Saratchandra points out the value of our organic society which gives a positive dimension to the characters and their actions blending both good and evil. He does not conceive of this rural society as an idyllic Eden and hence when we meet a character like Mṛṇāl in *Gṛhadāha* her impact upon us is primarily due to her immersion in the life-giving forces, forces that have been generated by the hoary tradition of our country. She is, therefore, not baffled by the fleeting passions of life like Achalā, who, despite her complexity, is a frail creature in contrast to her. When Achalā's father Kēdār Bābu visits Mahim's village and meets Mṛṇāl, he perceives the strength of this communal living—the contrast between Calcutta and this remote village. He sees clearly that although the villagers are illiterate, they are not ignorant. The quintessence of an ancient civilization is blended into their bone and marrow. Achalā strikes us as one of the Arnoldian characters—half-hearted believers in casual creeds poised between two worlds, one dying and the other yet in the throes of birth. Such a conflict is seen in other works of Saratchandra, for example, *Dattā*. Its heroine Bijayā confronts the village in all its evil aspects represented by Bilāsbihārī and Rāsbihārī and it is on the strength of her moral integrity that she is able to foil the

machination of the father-son combination and her personal life burgeons through her association with Narēn. When Bijayā has been trapped by Rāsbihārī to an apparent betrothal, Bijayā's actions show how intelligently she can react to the crises in life. Whether the setting is rural or urban, the staple of Saratchandra's novels is the truth of the emotions, the language of the heart being more genuine than the language of the head. But this revelation is not made by any kind of a *faux pas* although on occasions, there may seem, to the modern reader, a certain prolixity of the feelings as in *Dēbdās* or *Charitrahin*. A careful analysis of the characters, however, will show how the author balances them by pitting reason against emotion especially in the case of his women. Some of them like Kamal, Kiranmayī, Sābitrī, Śōṛasī, Bijayā, Kamal latā, Rājlakṣmī, Bhārati are romantic rebels, they combine in them beauty and intelligence and refuse to be defeated by the hostile forces of life. It is through such characters that Saratchandra presents an integrated vision of life that is primarily moral and spiritual and refutes the opinion of Albert Schweitzer that the Indian view of life is life negating. Even the men who at first are not quite conscious of their destiny get, through this contact with these reservoirs of the life force, a shock of recognition and accept life and wish to live. The dying Jibānanda in *Dēnā Pāṇā* makes a striking assertion when he comes to know of the impending departure of Śōṛasī to a leper asylum. To her query whether he intended to renounce the world, he replies "I cannot destroy anything in the world. I want to live here—live like a man amidst men". A similar transformation occurs in Ajit when he comes in contact with Kamal in *Śēṣ Praīna*. His engagement to Manōramā is broken off because he perceives the difference between love and infatuation, between the genuine and the spurious. It becomes a culture of emotions, not a cultivation of them.

In this way in almost all the novels of Saratchandra there is an assessment of moral and spiritual values inhering in the theme of personal relationships. Such an assessment requires a profound understanding of human nature and in this case, as has been generally observed the balance is tipped in favour of women. Such a tipping might have made the novels sentimental and sloppy and if we confine ourselves to the volume of tears shed by the women, such an impression is likely to occur. On the other hand, most of the women are extremely complex and the development of their character through the gamut of circumstances, mostly adverse, is often surprising. These women are generally of two categories, one stoical, accepting and enduring suffering and then given to renunciation or resignation, like Sābitrī, Ramā, Bindu, Pārbatī, the other of tougher fibre, taking the initiative in action, capable of sharp intellectual analysis of baffling problems of life, like Kamal, Kiranmayī, Śōṛasī, Sumitrā, Bhārati. These latter are manifestations of the life force exemplified in women like Anne or Candida of Shaw, or Nora of Ibsen, or Eustacia Vye and Bathsheba Everdene of Hardy. What, however, is so striking is the nobility and dignity with which Saratchandra endows them, and they issue from moral and spiritual qualities that he discovered in woman. He discusses these problems from the historical, social, and cultural angles in his essay *The Value of Women*, and holds that this value depends on man's love, sympathy, and sense of justice. Such an attitude to human beings makes him a humanist and enables him to rescue the human image from dissolution. We have fallen women like Chandramukhi, widows like Sābitrī and Kiranmayī, deserted women like Śōṛasī—all victims of an anachronistic and oppressive social system, but more so the victims of the uncaring hearts of men. But Saratchandra, unlike a Zola or a Dickens, does not confine himself to the plane of mere social realism, although his depiction of that realism in dealing with topics like childmarriage, widows, casteism, disease, or poverty can be as powerful as theirs. The description of Kiranmayī's house, for example, with its minute observation of poverty and squalor has also a moral function to perform by providing a contrasting setting to Kiranmayī's

physical beauty. As the drama develops we become aware, symbolically as it were, of the moral dilemma, the conflict between physical and moral beauty, and the plot thickens in consequence. In developing the characters, Saratchandra is not always equally convincing, however. The changes, for example, in Satis, Kiranm -i, or Achalā are not always supported by a set of convincing situations. On certain occasions Saratchandra can also be sentimental like Dickens at his worst; the death of Upēndra in *Charitrahin*, or Mādhav in *Śubhadā* of is sloppily sentimental and betrays a lapse of taste. But such lapses are rare since, in the main, his attitude to life as exhibited through the characters is mature and is always presented on the level of adult intelligence. That intelligence is also fortified by a pervasive compassion that reaches the height of tragedy as with Sandhyā in *Bāmunēr Mēyē* running away from the marriage altar and asking Arun to marry her as she is being forced to marry an old man. But Arun's hesitation makes her realize his inner weakness and she leaves him with a sense of resignation. So, when Arun later summons up courage to marry her, Sandhyā has been through him sufficiently to decline the offer in the most dignified manner. This is response to life on an adult level and should be compared with the response that occurs in so much popular fiction in which a similar situation would have ended in a compromise or sentimental reconciliation. When character loses its identity the behavior generally degenerates into sentimentality or fantasy characterised by a cliché-ridden language as is the case with a large volume of modern Bengali fiction. Even the novel of social realism, in the sense of George Lukacs, as for example, Dipak Chaudhuri's *Pātālē Ēk Ritu* is not free from this blemish. On the other hand, the capacity of a character to face life's challenges not only reveals his or her inner strength but its development often takes surprising turns which, on occasions, besides lending the maximum depth, also results in what James Joyce calls epiphany. We may, in this context, think of the entrance of Surēś in *Gṛhadūha* into their bedroom where he finds the weeping Achalā prostrate on the bed. The scene takes away the blinkers from the eyes. He recognises that his mistake is similar to the greedy person who tries to snatch away the ineffable beauty of the dew drops shining in the morning light. The castle of his dreams is shattered to bits in a moment. Likewise in *Dēnā Pāōnā*, there is the scene where Jibūnanda thinking about the construction of a small bridge in the village suddenly finds his whole being suffused with a new awareness as this bridge bereft of any art or beauty, appears before him in an extraordinary shape as the symbol of the joys and sorrows of the village community. Such a realisation of character through action is possible only on the part of great artists for whom art becomes a medium of organising the chaotic experiences of life into a meaningful pattern. The perception of order in this pattern results in the centrality of art, its capacity to cleanse our beings of the ironies of life. Saratchandra had an extraordinary capacity to portray the depth of life with compassion and in this he resembles Tagore and Tolstoy. That capacity has practically disappeared from the novel today, except, perhaps, in the case of Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay, Banaphul, Bimal Mitra, or Jarasandha. Modern Bengali fiction rarely succeeds in presenting a living and memorable character and hence fails to explore the depths of life. To compensate for this inadequacy, as it were, there appear novels like *Bibar* or *Rāt Bhārē Bṛ̥ṣ̥ti*. On the other hand, by making us aware of life in such range and depth Saratchandra also enables us to perceive our great spiritual loss. It is indeed an irreparable loss—the loss of our authentic self, the reduction of the human beings into marionettes to whom the following words of Kamal to Harēndra in *Śēṣ Prasna* may produce a strange music: "I say, renunciation of the world and practice of austerities are not for us; our desire is to live with all the grandeur and beauty of the earth, to live with our whole being." These words might as well have come from a Traherne or a Tagore. It is characters with a full sense of being that can perceive the eternal pathos of human existence and respond

to it in the sense that Lawrence implied in the quotation given earlier. The relevance of Saratchandra for us today lies precisely in the exploration and delineation of life in its elemental form. It is 'criticism of life' at its richest and best. His novels not only make us conscious of our impoverished and often insignificant lives but discharge ably and relevantly the novel's function as given by Lawrence: "Now here we see the beauty and great value of the novel. Philosophy, religion, science, they are all of them busy nailing things down to get a stable equilibrium. But the novel, no. The novel is the highest example of the subtle interrelatedness that man has discovered. Everything is true in its own time, place, circumstance and untrue outside of its own time, place, circumstance. If you try to nail anything down in the novel, either it kills the novel or the nail gets up and walks away with the novel."

The 'subtle interrelatedness' of human beings can be realized only when a writer creates characters that can triumph over 'time, place, circumstance'. Art then becomes perennial.





# ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ର — ଏକ ମୂଲ୍ୟାୟନ

ସୁରେନ୍ଦ୍ର ମହାନ୍ତି

“ଅନାଗତ ଭବିଷ୍ୟତରେ ମୋ ସାହିତ୍ୟର କୌଣସି ମୂଲ୍ୟ ଚାହିଁବ କି ନାହିଁ, ତାହା ମୋ ସତ୍ୟୋପଲବ୍ଧିର ସାକ୍ଷୀ । ପଦ ଭାଷା ବ୍ୟାପକ ମାନଙ୍କର ସତ୍ୟୋପଲବ୍ଧି ସହ ମୋର ସତ୍ୟୋପଲବ୍ଧି ସଂଗଠିତ ହୋଇ ପଡ଼େ, ତେବେ ମୋର ସାହିତ୍ୟ ପରାଜୟ ହୁଏନା କରନ୍ତୁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏହାର ଜୀବନ ଯେତେବେଳେ ନିଃଶେଷିତ ହେବ, ସେତେବେଳେ ଏହାର କଳାତ୍ମା ଉପରେ ଆଉ ଏକ ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ, ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ତଥା ପୃଥିବୀର ସାହିତ୍ୟର ପ୍ରୟୋଜନ ପଡ଼ିବ । କୌଣସି ସେଇ ନିଶି ମୁଁ ନାହିଁ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା କରୁଛି ଯେ—ମୋ ଯେମିତି ଭାଷାରେ ଏପରି ଏକ ସମ୍ପୃକ୍ତ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ବିକାଶ ଲାଭ କରୁ, ଯାହା ସମ୍ପୃକ୍ତ ମୋ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ନିଷ୍ଠା ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିବ । ”

ନିଜ ସାହିତ୍ୟ କୃତିର ମୂଲ୍ୟାୟନ କରିବାକୁ ଯାହା ଏହାକୁ ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କ ନିଜସ୍ବ ରକ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ତାଙ୍କ ସାହିତ୍ୟିକ ପ୍ରାଣର ଓ ପ୍ରଭାବ ଏବେ ସୁଦ୍ଧା ସେ ନିଃଶେଷିତ ହୋଇନାହିଁ, ତାହା ଏହି ମହାନ ଔପନ୍ୟାସକଙ୍କ ଜନ୍ମଶତବାର୍ଷିକ ପାଳନରେ ପ୍ରତିପାଦିତ ହୋଇଛି । ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କ ପଠାତୁରୁ ଯେବଳ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ କାଳିକ ସମଗ୍ର ଭାରତୀୟ ଉପନ୍ୟାସ ସାହିତ୍ୟର ଅନ୍ତରାଳ, ଆଜି କି ଆଗାମୀ କାଳର ସେହି ବସ୍ତୁର ପରିଚ୍ଛନ୍ନ ଗତିପଥ ସହ ଯୋଡ଼ି ନିଜ ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କ ପ୍ରଭାବ ଅଧ୍ୟୟନ ମନେ ନିଆଯାଉଛି — ବିଶେଷତଃ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଉପନ୍ୟାସ ସାହିତ୍ୟରେ । ଜଣେ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରଜ୍ଞାନୀ ଲେଖକ ରୂପେ ଆଜି ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କ କବଳ ବସନ୍ତରେ ସାମାନ୍ୟ ହୁଏନା । ଭାରତୀୟ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ସମସ୍ତ ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକ ଭାଷାରେ ବହୁଳ ଅନୁବାଦ ଯୋଗୁଁ ମାଧ୍ୟମେ ତାଙ୍କ କୃତି ଯେ ଆଜି ବ୍ୟାପକତା ଉପାଦାନ ପରିଚିତ ହୋଇ ପାରି ଅଛନ୍ତି ।

ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଗୁରୁଜୀ ( ୧୮୭୭-୧୯୩୮ ) ଭାରତୀୟ ଔପନ୍ୟାସକ ଓ କାଳ୍ପନିକ ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀର ( Bhagalpur Group of Novelists and story writers ) ଅନ୍ତର୍ଭୁକ୍ତ । ଭାରତୀୟରେ ତାଙ୍କର ବାଲ୍ୟକାଳର ଅଭ୍ୟାସିତ ହୋଇନାହିଁ । ସାହିତ୍ୟିକ ବର୍ଗୀୟ ସାହିତ୍ୟିକ ପରିବେଶରୁ ବିଚ୍ଛିନ୍ନ ହୋଇ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ସାଧନା ଆରମ୍ଭ ହେବାକୁ ଯାହା ସାହିତ୍ୟ ସାଧନା ସେହି ଆଦ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଭାବରେ ସୁଦ୍ଧା ସେ ବହୁ ସାହିତ୍ୟାବଳୀ ରଚନା ପ୍ରଭାବ ଓ ହୁଏନା କରୁ ନାହିଁ । ‘ଭୟା’ ନାମକ ଏକ ହସ୍ତଲେଖ ପଦ୍ୟ ଯେମାନଙ୍କ ମୁଖ୍ୟ ଥିଲା [ ୧୮୯୭ ] । ତାଙ୍କର ସ୍ବଳ୍ପାୟ ସେନାରେ ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀର ଚରଣ ଲେଖକ ମାନଙ୍କରୁ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ଜୀବନରେ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରଜ୍ଞାନୀ ସେନାରେ ବିଶେଷ ସ୍ବଳ୍ପାୟ ଅନ୍ତେ କରିପାରିଥିଲେ । ‘କୁଣ୍ଡଳିନୀ’ କେବେଳେ ଯା ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ପ୍ରାଧିକାର ସାମଗ୍ରୀ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ କରୁଥିବା ଏକ କି ପାଖ ଦ୍ବାର ଆପୋକ୍ତ ହୁଏନା ପ୍ରତିପାଦିତ ହୋଇ ଯେମାନେ ସୁବିଧା ଲାଭ କରିଥିଲେ । ‘ଭାରତୀ’ ନାମକ ଏକ ପଦ୍ୟରେ ଯେମାନଙ୍କର ଅଧ୍ୟାପକତାଗୁଡ଼ିକ ପ୍ରକାଶ ପାଉଥିଲା । ଯେମାନେ ମୁଁ ୧୯୩୪ ଭାବ ପ୍ରାଧିକାର ଓ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରଜ୍ଞାନୀ

ଏକ । ସୌମ୍ୟତାକୁ ପରିବେଶରେ ନାହିଁ ଯେଉଁଠି ଏହା ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କର ମୁଖ୍ୟ ଉପକ୍ରମ ଥିଲା । ଶରତକାଳର ଉତ୍ତମାମାନ  
ଏହା ବୈଶିଷ୍ଟ୍ୟରୁ ମୁକ୍ତ ନୁହେଁ । ଏହାକୁ ନାହିଁ କେବଳ ଗୋଟିଏ ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କର 'ପ୍ରାଣ' ଓ 'କରିଷ୍ଣ' ଆଦି ଉପକ୍ରମରେ  
ସୌମ୍ୟତା ଗୋଟିଏ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ । ମାତ୍ର ପ୍ରାଣୀମାନଙ୍କର କୌଣସି ନାହିଁ ।

[illegible]

ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କ କାଳରେ ରାଜନୈତିକ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ଅନ୍ଧ ସାଂଘିକ ନୈରାକ୍ୟମୟ ସାମ୍ବାଦିକତା ଥିଲା । ତାତ୍ତ୍ୱିକ ବାସ୍ତବବାଦ ଥିଲା ଏକ ଜୀବନ୍ତ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ । ‘ପଥେର ଦାସ’ରେ ସତ୍ୟମାତା ନରସିଂହ ଯାଧବଙ୍କ ଶିଳ୍ପୀ ଶୈଳୀରେ ଲେଖାଯାଇଥିବା ସମସ୍ତ ଆଲୋଚନାକୁ ପଢ଼ିଷ୍ଟ ହେବାପାଇଁ ଲୋକେ କରୁଥିଲେ ହେଁ ସାମାଜିକ ଓ ରାଜନୈତିକ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ପାଇଁ ଅନ୍ଧ ସାଂଘିକ ଶକ୍ତିର ପ୍ରଭାବ ଥିଲା ନାହିଁ । ଉଦାହରଣ ସ୍ୱରୂପ, ଅଶ୍ୱିନୀବେଳା ଯେଉଁ ଲାଘାବେଳା କଟକର ଲୋକ ‘ପଥେର ଦାସ’ ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀ ବସି କଳା କଳା କଲେ କିନ୍ତୁ କେବଳେ ଅସୁବିଧା ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ କଲେ ଏହି ଉପଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟର ନାହିଁ । ଉଦାହରଣ ସ୍ୱରୂପ —

“ନାଁ, କିନ୍ତୁ ମଧ୍ୟ କେହି ଏଥିରେ ବସିବା କରୁନାହାନ୍ତି । କେବଳ ଅନ୍ଧ ଲୋକେ ଏହାକୁ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରୁନାହାନ୍ତି । ଅନ୍ଧ ପଦ୍ୟର ମୂଲ୍ୟର ସ୍ୱଳ୍ପ ମାନବତାକୁ ମନେ ରଖିବାକୁ ହେବ । ତୁମେ କିନ୍ତୁ କେବଳ କାଳିକା ନୁହଁ ।”

ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କ ରାଜନୈତିକ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରେ ଲେଖାଯାଇଥିବା ଏହି ସୂକ୍ଷ୍ମ ପରୀକ୍ଷା କିନ୍ତୁ ‘ପଥେର ଦାସ’ରେ ଲେଖାଯାଇଥିବା ସମସ୍ତ ଆଲୋଚନା ପରିଧାରିତ, କିନ୍ତୁ ଅସୁବିଧା ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଲାଗି ଆସିବା ପରେ ଲେଖକଙ୍କ ମନେ କିଛି ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଶକ୍ତି ଥିଲା । ‘ପଥେର ଦାସ’ର ବିଶେଷ ଅଧ୍ୟାୟରେ ସତ୍ୟମାତା ନରସିଂହ ଯାଧବଙ୍କ କଥା କହିଛନ୍ତି —

“ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ଶେଷ ଆଦର୍ଶ ଯାହା ଥିଲା ଅନ୍ଧ ପଥେର ଦାସ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏହା ଏହା କିଛି ମାତ୍ର ନୁହେଁ । ଏହା ମଧ୍ୟ ଆଧ୍ୟାତ୍ମିକ ଶକ୍ତିର ପ୍ରତୀକ । ଏହା ଏକ ଶକ୍ତି ଯାହା ଏହି ଦେଶରେ ଅନ୍ୟ କିଛି ପଥ ନାହିଁ ।”

ଏହି ଲେଖକଙ୍କ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରେ ଲେଖାଯାଇଥିବା ଏହି ସୂକ୍ଷ୍ମ ପରୀକ୍ଷା କିନ୍ତୁ ‘ପଥେର ଦାସ’ରେ ଲେଖାଯାଇଥିବା ସମସ୍ତ ଆଲୋଚନା ପରିଧାରିତ, କିନ୍ତୁ ଅସୁବିଧା ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଲାଗି ଆସିବା ପରେ ଲେଖକଙ୍କ ମନେ କିଛି ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଶକ୍ତି ଥିଲା । ‘ପଥେର ଦାସ’ର ବିଶେଷ ଅଧ୍ୟାୟରେ ସତ୍ୟମାତା ନରସିଂହ ଯାଧବଙ୍କ କଥା କହିଛନ୍ତି —

ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କ ଲେଖାଯାଇଥିବା ଏହି ସୂକ୍ଷ୍ମ ପରୀକ୍ଷା କିନ୍ତୁ ‘ପଥେର ଦାସ’ରେ ଲେଖାଯାଇଥିବା ସମସ୍ତ ଆଲୋଚନା ପରିଧାରିତ, କିନ୍ତୁ ଅସୁବିଧା ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଲାଗି ଆସିବା ପରେ ଲେଖକଙ୍କ ମନେ କିଛି ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଶକ୍ତି ଥିଲା । ‘ପଥେର ଦାସ’ର ବିଶେଷ ଅଧ୍ୟାୟରେ ସତ୍ୟମାତା ନରସିଂହ ଯାଧବଙ୍କ କଥା କହିଛନ୍ତି —

ଯୁଗେ ଯୁଗେ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ କାଳକ୍ରମେ ସାମାଜିକ ପ୍ରତିବାଦର ସାମାଜିକ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରେ ଲେଖାଯାଇଥିବା ଏହି ସୂକ୍ଷ୍ମ ପରୀକ୍ଷା କିନ୍ତୁ ‘ପଥେର ଦାସ’ରେ ଲେଖାଯାଇଥିବା ସମସ୍ତ ଆଲୋଚନା ପରିଧାରିତ, କିନ୍ତୁ ଅସୁବିଧା ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଲାଗି ଆସିବା ପରେ ଲେଖକଙ୍କ ମନେ କିଛି ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଶକ୍ତି ଥିଲା । ‘ପଥେର ଦାସ’ର ବିଶେଷ ଅଧ୍ୟାୟରେ ସତ୍ୟମାତା ନରସିଂହ ଯାଧବଙ୍କ କଥା କହିଛନ୍ତି —

ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କ ଲେଖାଯାଇଥିବା ଏହି ସୂକ୍ଷ୍ମ ପରୀକ୍ଷା କିନ୍ତୁ ‘ପଥେର ଦାସ’ରେ ଲେଖାଯାଇଥିବା ସମସ୍ତ ଆଲୋଚନା ପରିଧାରିତ, କିନ୍ତୁ ଅସୁବିଧା ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଲାଗି ଆସିବା ପରେ ଲେଖକଙ୍କ ମନେ କିଛି ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଶକ୍ତି ଥିଲା । ‘ପଥେର ଦାସ’ର ବିଶେଷ ଅଧ୍ୟାୟରେ ସତ୍ୟମାତା ନରସିଂହ ଯାଧବଙ୍କ କଥା କହିଛନ୍ତି —

ଅବଦ୍ୟକୁ ଦେବା ପାଇଁ ଅବସ୍ଥିତ ଥିଲା । ତେଣୁ ‘ପଥେର ଦାବା’ରେ ସେ ରଜନାଭିକ୍ଷକ ଠାରୁ ସାହାଯ୍ୟକ ଉପରେ ଅଧିକ ଆଶ୍ରା ସ୍ଥାପନ କରିଛନ୍ତି ।

ଅଧୁନାକ ମନେଇ ଜନଧର୍ମୀ ଔପନ୍ୟାସକଙ୍କ ପରି ଶତାବ୍ଦୀର ମନୋରଞ୍ଜନଧର୍ମୀ ନଥିଲେ । ମମାନକୁ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ କରିବା କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ମାଙ୍କ ଚିନ୍ତା ଯେ ପ୍ରକାର ଥିଲା ସାଧନ ଓ ତେ ଗଲୁ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ତଥା ଉପନ୍ୟାସକୁ ଏହାର ଅନ୍ତରୂପେ ଗଢ଼ଣ କରିଥିଲେ । ବାସ୍ତବିକ ଚିନ୍ତାକୁ ହିତୃତେ ଚିନ୍ତାକୁ ‘ରୁଲେ ଫିଲ୍ମ ଟାକ୍ସିଡାଲୀ’ ହୋଇପାରିଛି । ‘ବୁକ୍ସବର’ ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀଙ୍କ ପରି ସେ ମଧ୍ୟ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ କରୁଥିଲେ ଯେ ଏକ ମଜବୁତ ଶକ୍ତିକୁ କେବଳ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ କରିଦେଲେ ସମାଜର ନରନାଶମାନଙ୍କର ଗୁଣାତ୍ମକ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଆସେ ଆସେ ଆସିପାଏନା । ତାହା ମାତ୍ର ଯେ ବିଶ୍ୱାସର ଚିନ୍ତାକୁ ହିତୃତେ କେବଳ ପ୍ରକୃତ ସାମାଜିକ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ସମ୍ଭବ ।

ଚିନ୍ତାକୁ ଯେ ଅଧିକ ନାହିଁ । ଇତିମଧ୍ୟରେ ବାସ୍ତବ, ଅପରିସୀମ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଖିଆଇଛି । ସେ ଯୁଗର ସାହାଯ୍ୟକ ମୂଲ୍ୟବୋଧ ଯା ପ୍ରକାର କି ନିଜ ପ୍ରସାରରେ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତିତ ହୋଇଯାଇଛି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଦେଶିକା, ନିର୍ବିଶେଷରେ ଅଗଣିତ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତାପ୍ରେମୀ ନାମୀ ଓ ପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ହୃଦୟରେ ନିଜର ଗୁଣାତ୍ମକ ଅନ୍ତରାତ୍ମାକୁ ଲାଭ କରିବେ ଉଚିତ୍ତର କଣ୍ଠରେ ଦୋଷିତ ହୋଇଥିବା ‘ପଥେର ଦାବା’ର ଏହି ଚାରି ମାତ୍ର

“ଆମେ ସମସ୍ତେ ପଞ୍ଚକ । ମଙ୍ଗଳା ମନୁଷ୍ୟକୁ ପଥରେ ଗୁଲିବାଲ ସବୁପ୍ରକାର ଦାବା ଅଂଗୀକାର କରି ଆମେ ସମସ୍ତେ ବାଧାବନ୍ଧନ ଯା ଗିରୁରି ଗୁଲିବୁ । ଆମପତେ ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଆମବେ, ସେମାନେ ଯେପରି ବିନାଶପ୍ରଦ ହୋଇପାରନ୍ତି, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଅବାଧମୁକ୍ତ ଗଣ୍ଡକି କେହି ଯେପରି ଅଟକାଇ ନପାରିବୁ, ଏଇ ଆମର ପଣ । ଅପଣ ଯମ ଦଳକୁ ଆସିବେ ?”

ଏହି ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ଚିନ୍ତନ । ଏହା ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଦେଶର ବିଭିନ୍ନ କାଳର ପୃଷ୍ଠଭୂମିରେ ଉଦ୍‌ଘାଟିତ ହୋଇଆସିଛି । ଏବେମଧ୍ୟ ଏହା ତାତ୍ପର୍ଯ୍ୟପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ହୋଇ ରହିଛି । ଶତାବ୍ଦୀର ଶତାବ୍ଦୀକା ପାଳନ ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କୁ ଏହି କାଳ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣରେ ପୁରଣ କରାଇଦେଇ ଓ ଇତିହାସିକ ବକ୍ତିକ ପଥରେ ଯାହାର ସେହି ଅନ୍ତରାତ୍ମା ଯାହା ଅନାଦିତ ରହି । ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ଗୋଷ ନାହିଁ । ତେ ସାହା ମଧ୍ୟ ଗୋଷନା ।

ଅନୁବାଦକ : ଟିଉରଜ୍ଜିନ ବେହେରା  
ଶ୍ୟାମସୁନ୍ଦର ଦାସ

# Saratchandra :

## The novelist of ideas

Surendra Mohanty

"Whether my writings will have any significance in the unborn future is beyond my comprehension. If my experience of truth does not synchronise with the experiences of truth in the future, my writings will of course have to yield. But if its life will be exhausted, it will be for the reason that its skeleton was needed for the emergence of a greater, fuller and more beautiful literature. Without regrets, therefore, I will pray, in my country and language, let a richer and more beautiful literature grow in comparison to which my literature will look insignificant."

Thus had written Saratchandra in evaluation of his own works. But that his writings have not yet lost their relevance will be amply borne out by the birth centenary celebrations of the eminent novelist. The thematic structure, style, and technique of the contemporary Bengali fiction, nay, of the Indian fiction may have changed since the days of Saratchandra ; but the impact of his works remains yet undiminished. Saratchandra is no longer a Bengali writer. Through extensive translations and filmisation he has reached wider Indian audiences almost in all the Indian languages.

Saratchandra Chatterji (1876—1938), belonged to the 'Bhagalpur group of novelists and story writers'. His literary activities started outside the milieu of Bengali literary culture, as he was brought up in childhood days in Bhagalpur. While he was still in his teens, Saratchandra had gathered round him a host of literary aspirants and started a hand written journal 'Chhaya' (1896). According to Dr. Sukumar Sen, almost all the writers of this group became, in later life, wellknown writers of fiction. They were all prize winners in the short story competitions sponsored by the manufacturer of the hair oil 'Kuntalin' and other perfumes, and some of their early writings were published in the pages of 'Bharati'. They were mostly romantic and sentimental and their forte was psycho-analysis of women around romantic themes. Saratchandra's writings were not also free from these characteristics. Even his later writings like *Charitrahīn* and *Pathēr Dābī* are not free from an exuberance of romantic love and sentimental dialogues.

Saratchandra was influenced by both Bankimchandra Chatterji and Rabindranath Tagore. While his early novels like *Birāj Bau*, *Pallī-Samāj*, etc., were not much different in theme from Bankimchandra's, Tagore's influence was distinct in his later writings. In spite of all this, if

Saratchandra developed a distinct literary image, it was for the sweeping dimension of ideas, which in his time context was almost revolutionary. The deep humanism and radicalism of his ideas were so pervasive that he attained instantaneous fame and popularity in modern Bengali literature. "Even Bankimchandra Chatterji's works, not to say Rabindranath Tagore's, were never received by the general reader with eagerness and warmth", so writes Dr. Sen in his history of the Bengali literature.

The world literary scene of the early decades of the twentieth century was a period of confusion and loss of faith in tradition, as a result of developments in the socio-economic, political and other fields. This was a great feature of the early twentieth century novels. Unconsciously though, Saratchandra's novels bear the imprint of this intellectual turmoil and cynicism at the traditional Indian values and faith. The long harangues and diatribes of Kīraṇmayī in *Charitrahin* against the Hindu *Purāṇas* and *Upaniṣadas*, and her dialectical analysis of the concept of soul, though unwarranted and out of place, can be cited as an instance.

The writings of Saratchandra bear the signs of the conflict between the traditional values and ideas and the new emerging forces of progress. Saratchandra, being a humanist, could not be an extremist. He always sought to strike a balance in this conflict. Though he had raised his voice loud and strident against the superstition-ridden, castebound Hindu society, he had never despised it. Tiwāri, a type character in *Pathēr Dābī*, was allergic towards Bhāratī as she was a Christian and, therefore, according to his standards, a 'mlechchha'. Yet his attitude towards Bhāratī changed through latter's nursing, while Tiwāri was laid up with an attack of smallpox in a friendless city. Similarly, Sābitrī, an erratic widow in *Charitrahin*, carved out a niche in the affection of Satiś and Bēhārī. Saratchandra relied more on this change of heart than on compulsion for change of human character and emergence of new progressive values. He did not ride roughshod over the caste-ridden and dogmatic Hindu society. But he advocated a change of heart through which real reform could be brought about. Though in the present context this ambivalent attitude may seem naive, yet it has to be remembered that Saratchandra could not get over the limitations of his times. The great Oriya novelist, Fakir Mohan (1845–1913), who was almost a contemporary of Saratchandra, though an ardent social reformer, suffered from the same handicap as would be evident in his novel *Prāyaścitta*.

On the political front, the issue between non-violence and anarchical terrorism was a burning question of Saratchandra's times. Though, through the character of Sabyasāchī, Saratchandra projected the ideas of anarchical terrorism for bringing about political change in the country, yet he had lurking sympathy for non-violence and peaceful methods for attaining the change. For instance, Bhāratī, an ardent activist of the 'Pathēr Dābī' group which advocated terrorism, assures Apūrba when the latter enquires of her whether members of 'Pathēr Dābī' do not believe in untouchability and caste inhibitions: "No, but if someone wants to abide by it we do not feed him by force. We respect the individual sentiment. You need not be afraid." This logic can be extended to the realm of his political ideas. Anarchical violence may be found necessary at times, as circumstances warrant, yet it is not a 'must' inasmuch as the same result could be obtained through the change of heart.

In chapter twenty of *Pathēr Dābī*, Bhāratī, in her dialogue with Sabyasāchī, says: "We want to realise the highest ideals of freedom, but I cannot believe that in order to reach this noble objective of God, there is no other way than this cruel path of bloodshed." This ambivalent approach is not an ideological hesitancy of Saratchandra, but limitations of his times. Even Sabyasāchī, the mentor of 'Pathēr Dābī', could not extricate himself from this attitudinal confusion. Otherwise, why would he have gone out of his way and behaved in a sentimental fashion to save the life of Apūrba, when death sentence was pronounced on him by the rest of the 'Pathēr Dābī'?

group in a secret trial for his betrayal of their activities? Whatever may have been the social and political views of Saratchandra, he was a liberal humanist. Across centuries, through innumerable bloodsheds and cruel repressions in the name of change and progress, ultimately these values of liberal humanism have prevailed and have ushered in the emergence of a new and better generation of men.

Though Saratchandra dealt with familiar things and situations, essentially he was a writer of protest and dissent. His protest is sometimes loud and sometimes mute. Yet its strength cannot be gainsaid. His sympathy for the underdog, the oppressed, and the humiliated overflowed the brims of his writings. He was for the emancipation of women, abolition of caste-ridden society, remarriage rights of women, and a sympathetic appreciation of human limitations. In this regard, he was not fundamentally much different from the other novelists of his times.

Every literature worth its name is bound to be a literature of protest. Saratchandra clothed it in a sophisticated style and technique. But his greatness lies in the fact that he was a novelist of ideas. In this context it may be recalled that in the post-World War period of the English literature, there was a group of novelists named 'Bloomsbury Group'. These novelists wanted to feed their ideas and convictions to the existing society in order to make it a better world. Saratchandra, though far apart from the Bloomsbury Group, had the same objective in view. The long discourses by various characters in his novels, which were out of place and out of tune, were mainly designed to project his socio political ideas in a decadent society. In *Pathēr Dābī*, therefore, he has claimed superiority of the litterateur over the politicians of the moment. Unlike the present generation of novelists, he was not a mere entertainer. His ideas were his tools for changing the society and he had chosen the short story and fiction as its medium. Verily, the pen was mightier than the sword in the writings of Saratchandra. He believed, like the Bloomsbury Group of novelists, that a formal change in the ordering of society could not itself change the men and women who lived in it. Change of ideas and concepts alone could bring about a real change in the society.

The time context of Saratchandra has undoubtedly undergone vast change beyond recognition. The literary taste of his time has no doubt changed in keeping with the mood of present times. But if Saratchandra will still survive in the hearts of freedom-loving men and women, not of any particular country or time, it is for the message of *Pathēr Dābī* as expressed in the words of Bhārati :

"We are all crusaders. We will march ahead by accepting all the demands of man for his growth and evolution, by crushing all the obstacles on our way so that those who come after us can march without obstacles. None can stop this undaunted march—this is our pledge. Will you join our group?"

This is an eternal question which has been raised in different contexts. But its relevance is still alive, and has not lost its force. Let the centenary celebration remind us of this pledge once again, so that the pilgrim continues his unending journey on the tortuous path of history.





# ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ର — ଏକ ସିଂହାବଲୋକନ

ସର୍କି ରାଉତରାୟ

ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଭାବରେ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଜଗତରେ ଏକ ଅବମୁଗ୍ଧତା ନାମ । ଜଣେ ବଳଷ୍ଠ କଥାକାର ରୂପେ ସେ ତାଙ୍କର ସମସ୍ୟାମୟିକ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ଔପନ୍ୟାସିକ ପ୍ରେମଗୁଣଙ୍କ ସହ ଭୁଲିନାସୁ । କେବଳ ବଙ୍ଗଳାର ବିଶାଳ ସାମ୍ରାଜ୍ୟ ବର୍ଗ ଦୁର୍ବଳ, ବଙ୍ଗଳାଭାଷା ସହ ପରିଚିତ ନ୍ୟାୟକ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାମ୍ରାଜ୍ୟ ମଧ୍ୟ ତାଙ୍କର ଉପନ୍ୟାସ ଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରନ୍ତି ଓ ସମାଦାନ କରନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କର ଶାଳାଧୀନ ଦୁର୍ବଳ ଦଶକରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ଲବ୍ଧ ପଦ୍ମ ଓ ଚରୁଣ ମାଳ ଉପରେ ସେ ଗଭୀର ପ୍ରଭାବ ବିସ୍ତାର କରିପାରିଥିଲେ । ଧରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ କାଳରେ ତାଙ୍କର କେତେକ ଉପନ୍ୟାସ ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ ଅନୁବାଦିତ ହେବା ସହିତ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାମ୍ରାଜ୍ୟ ଓ ତାଙ୍କ ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀ ଫରାଦୀକୁ ଉପଭୋଗ କରିପାରିଛନ୍ତି ।

ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଭେଦ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ନିଜର ଓ ପ୍ରାଚୀନପତ୍ନୀଙ୍କ ବିରୁଦ୍ଧରେ ଯେଉଁ ଅବିଶାଳ ସମାଜ ଗଠନ କରିଥିଲେ, ତାହା ତାଙ୍କର ବଙ୍ଗଳା ସାମ୍ରାଜ୍ୟ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ପ୍ରଥମ ଓ ବିରୋଧୀ ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ପ୍ରଦାନ କରୁଥିଲା । ସେମାନେ ମୁଖ୍ୟତଃ ଦୁଇଟି ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀରେ ବିଭକ୍ତ ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲେ — ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ପତ୍ନୀ ଓ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ଦ୍ଵାରା । ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ଦ୍ଵାରା ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀଙ୍କର ତାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଶେଷ ମଧ୍ୟ ଗଠନ ହେଲା । ପୁରୀ ବନ୍ଧୁ କଥା, ତଥାକଥିତ “ପ୍ରଗତିଶୀଳ ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀ” ତାଙ୍କର ମଧ୍ୟ କେନ୍ଦ୍ର କେନ୍ଦ୍ର କରିଛନ୍ତି, ଯେ ମଧ୍ୟବିତ୍ତବ୍ୟ ଶାଳୀ ନେତୃତ୍ଵରେ, ଦୁର୍ବଳ ଉପବିକାଶ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକାରୀ ଉପାଦାନ । ସେମାନେ ଭୁଲିଯାଇଛନ୍ତି ଯେ ଧର୍ମର ପତ୍ନୀ ଓ ନିଜର ଜୀବନକୁ ତ୍ୟାଗ କରିବା ପରେ ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଜଣେ ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ସାମ୍ରାଜ୍ୟ ଓ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ପତ୍ନୀ ଥିଲେ । ପତ୍ନୀମାନଙ୍କ ନେତୃତ୍ଵରେ ଶରତଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନକୁ “ଜୀବନ ମାମୁଁ” ରୂପେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ନିଜର ଅନୁପମ ବଙ୍ଗଳା ମଧ୍ୟ ସାମ୍ରାଜ୍ୟ ଓ ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାୟ ଜୀବନରେ ଥିବା ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ମଧ୍ୟ କିନ୍ତୁ ଅବିଶାଳ ପ୍ରକାରକୁ ସେ ରୂପ ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି । ପ୍ରକୃତ ସମାଜର ସମସ୍ତ ଶକ୍ତି ନିଜର ଦ୍ଵାରା ଓ ବିରୋଧୀ ଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ କେବଳ ନିଜର କରି ସେ ନାନୁ ଭାବି ନାହାନ୍ତି, ଜୀବନ ସ୍ଵାଭାବିକ ମୂଲ୍ୟକୁ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରି ତଥା ଭାବ୍ୟ ମଧ୍ୟ ବେଶିଷ୍ଟ୍ୟ ବିକଳ ମଧ୍ୟେ ଗଠନକୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ରୂପ ଦେଇ ପାରିଛନ୍ତି ।

ତାଙ୍କର କେତେକ ଅତି ବିଶ୍ଵଳ ଗୁଣାତ୍ମୀ ତାଙ୍କୁ ‘ଗାନ୍ଧୀ’ ବୋଲି କହିବାରେ ମୋଟେ ସନ୍ତୁଷ୍ଟ ନ ଥିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କୁ ସେମାନେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ‘ଦାସନକ’, ‘ସମାଜସ୍ଵାଦକ’, ‘ବିପ୍ଳବୀ’ ଭାବେ ଅଧ୍ୟାୟ ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତୀ କାଳର ଦୁର୍ବଳ ଗଠନ ‘ସତ୍ୟବାଦୀ’ ଓ ‘ଶେଷ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ’ ଏହି ପଦ୍ଧତି ଅଧ୍ୟାୟର ପାଇଁ କେତେକ ସାଧନ ଦାୟୀ । ଜନେକ ସୁପରିଚିତ ଉପାଦାନ ସମାଲୋଚକଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ପ୍ରଥମେ ଯେଉଁ ଉତ୍ତର ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀ ଗଠନ ହେବା ପରେ ଏକ ଆବେଗ-ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଅଭିନୟ, ଯାହାକି ସେହିଭଳି ଦୃଶ୍ୟର ଅବେଶା ସେହିଭଳି ଚର୍ଚ୍ଚାଙ୍କର ଚିନ୍ତାମାନଙ୍କୁ ଅଧିକ ସମ୍ଭାବିତ । ଦ୍ଵିତୀୟ ଥେଉଁକି ନିଜ ନେତୃତ୍ଵ ଉପରେ ଏକ ଧର୍ମ, ଯାହାକି ବହୁତ ଦୂର ଦୂର୍ବଳ କଥା

ନୈତିକ ହୁଅଁ । ସୁଦ୍ଧା ଏହା ମଧ୍ୟ ଏକ ଧର୍ମ ହୁଅଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ମୋ ମନରେ ମନ ଲେଖକ ଗଭୀରତା ତଥା ତାଙ୍କର ଆଦର୍ଶ ଧ୍ୟାନରେ ଏହି ଗଳ୍ପର ମେଧାବୃତ୍ତି ଦେଖାଯାଏ ।

[illegible][illegible]

ଏହାକୁ ଏ କଥାରେ ଏକମତେ ସେ, ଶାନ୍ତନୁଙ୍କୁ ପୁରୀରୁ ନେବାବଳୀ ପାଟଣାକୁ ଲେଖାଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଅପେକ୍ଷା ଅଧିକ ବଳଷ୍ଟି କରା, ଏଗୁଡ଼ିକରେ ମୋର ନିଜସ୍ବ ପ୍ରତିଭା ପରିଷ୍କୃତ ହୋଇଛି, ଅଥଚ ମୋ ଝାଡ଼ି ଯୁକ୍ତ ଚରିତ୍ରମାନ ନିଷାଦନ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଅନ୍ୟ କଥାରେ କହିଲେ; ମୋର ନରମ ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ପ୍ରତି ସେ ସତ୍ୟ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି ଓ ଏହା ମଧ୍ୟରେ ମୋର ଲେଖାଗୁଡ଼ିକ ସ୍ବଭାବିକ ପରିଣତି ଦିନରେ ବିକାଶ କରିଛି ।

[illegible]

‘ଗୋଟିଏ ଘର, ଦୁଇ ଭାଗ’ ପୁସ୍ତକଟିର ବୁକ୍‌ସିଗ୍‌ନିଂ ବସ୍ତୁ ତିନି ଟଙ୍କା (ମାଲିକାନା ନିୟମାବଳୀ) :

[illegible]



# Saratchandra :

## A study in retrospect

Sachi Raut Roy

In the literary world of India Saratchandra is a name to conjure with. He figures as a story-teller of great magnitude, equal perhaps to his Hindi counterpart, Premchand—his contemporary. His novels were read and admired not only by vast multitudes of Bengali readers, but also by many an Oriya reader conversant with the Bengali language. In fact, in the thirties, he exercised considerable influence on the young and older generations of Orissa. In a later period, some of his novels were translated into Oriya and these, though not in their original form, were equally enjoyed by the Oriya readers and writers.

Saratchandra's relentless struggles against the forces of conservatism and revivalism through some of his ever memorable characters made him simultaneously popular and unpopular with his vast readership which is broadly divided into two categories—the pro-changers and the no-changers. The no-changers and the diehards had, of course, no soft word for him. But what is more astonishing is that even some of the so-called 'Progressives' dab him with various interpretations such as a protagonist of middle class morality, supine sentimentality, etc. forgetting the fact that Saratchandra was a realist out and out and an avowed non-conformist in his approach to life embracing both rural and urban communities. He accepted change as a 'partner of life', in the words of Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, and tried to portray in his own incomparable way the slow but sure processes of change that were taking place in our social and individual life. He not only delineated the inherent conflicts and antagonisms of the existing social relationships, but also painted life in its native grandeur emphasizing unity amidst diversity that was Indian society.

Some of his admirers, through over-enthusiasm, imagined him to be anything except a story-teller and tried to clothe him with borrowed plumes of a 'philosopher', 'social reformer', and even a 'revolutionary', and what not. His two later works *Pathēr Dāhī* and *Śēṣ Praśna* belonging to the 'ambitious' phase were partly responsible for these attributions. According to a liberal critic of eminence, the first, a melodrama of violent action interspersed with patriotic rant proved more satisfying to Sexton Blake's flock than Sexton Blake himself and the second an essay on new morality was neither new nor moral, nor for that matter an essay.

But this attitude, I should say, is rather a sedentary view of the great artist Saratchandra and what he really stood for. An artist has got many moods to express and many a situation to tackle. Besides, considered against the background of freedom struggle and the upsurge of patriotic movement, *Pathēr Dābī* was more an invocation rather than a work of 'proud detachment' which a writer sometimes boasts of.

That Saratchandra was not isolated from the mainstream of national consciousness can hardly be over-emphasized. Nobody can deny today that the book, despite rhetorics, had an impact on the then revolutionary elements of the society who had staked their all for the freedom of the country.

All are, however, unanimous that Saratchandra's earlier works are more enduring than the later ones, "for in it he drew on his own resources; that is to say, he chose, or rather, was chosen by, the right subjects, so that the rest took care of itself." The Brahmin-dominated Bengali village was known to him well enough. The dirt and squabble, the mean plots and counterplots warring against every ounce of beauty, and beauty itself inviolable, invulnerable, bursting upon the dirt, stink and stagnation of village societies redeemed his earlier works. These bad characters, the crust of evil in village communities, have gone to the making of some of Saratchandra's memorable episodes.

Buddhadev Bose in his *An Acre of Green Grass* says of Saratchandra "Saratchandra is a master of sentiment, of the story of sentiments and even of the sentimental story. He has never depicted passion, nor life's enchantments or disenchantments, and his sensibility is limited. He has humour but never achieved comedy, he has pathos but tragedy is outside his range... His world is bound up in everyday reality, an altogether worldly world full of supremely sociable human beings whose actions and conversations are never intruded upon by animals, children and nature. Life as lived in imagination has no place, not one of his characters is born 'under one law to another bound.' Commonplace reality or domesticity is all. The stories he excels in are of domestic life or family life, the family in this context meaning to include not only brothers, sisters, uncles, cousins, etc., but also neighbours, grocers and gossips, in fact, the entire village. This, no doubt, is the most suitable ambient for the delineation of sentiment." At another place, he says that the finest portraiture in Saratchandra are, therefore, of adolescents—the coltlike boy overflowing with animal spirits, moderately blasphemous, immoderately boisterous, with the appearance of fierce untamability but longing to eat the rice from the woman who mothers him or whom he loves above all else, and hardly one of his characters is really adult, all of them being protagonists of chronological adolescence, instead of chronic ones, for, in growing up they threaten to outgrow their author.

But whatever it may be, it should be said to the credit of Saratchandra that the emotions of most of his characters hardly exceed their objective equivalents. The immense popularity which he had with his immediate audience may not be the yardstick of his future greatness, but is certainly a clear index of his awareness of life and its varied aspects and hidden splendours as well.

Saratchandra's canvas is wide and varied. One of his love stories is Burmese in setting and another an idyll of Bengal. In these stories he is at once an 'explorer of ugliness and the discoverer of beauty.'

Some of the women characters of Saratchandra are extremely womanly and charming. They loom longer in the minds of the readers than their male counterparts. Mr. Shibdas Ghosh rightly points out in his discourse that Hēmānginī of *Mējdidi*, Bindubāsini of *Bindur Chhēlē* and Nārāyanī of *Rāmēr Sumati* are noblest examples of ethical motherhood. The human bondage forged out by them is a typical example of 'impersonal motherhood'.

Saratchandra's stories follow time sequence. Time is humanized. His themes are realistic and bound in time and space with an agnostic outlook on life. Unlike some of the modern writers he did not try to dehumanize time and thereby create vulnerable 'gaps' in his story.

Saratchandra was aware of his limitations. He said a number of times that he would like to be eclipsed by newer talents who would explore life in a fuller manner and discover truth, since truth was ever changeable and relative, governed by the same laws of change that governed life and social relationships, and the values emerging out of them. When one ardent admirer once wanted to place him above Rabindranath, he humbly and aptly remarked : "It is readers like you I write for, whereas Rabindranath writes for readers like me."

Saratchandra was undoubtedly a great writer of the new epoch that marked the transition from a religion-oriented humanistic nationalism to a more rational and radical nationalism and even internationalism which accepted man as the measure of all things and defied all barriers of caste, creed, and nationality. To him an exploiter is an exploiter despite his religion and national identity, and an oppressor is always an oppressor whether he is a Hindu, Muslim, Parsi, or a Christian.

Saratchandra was a great liberal and perhaps the last one in Bengali literature, embodying all that are best and dynamic in the decaying feudal-colonial Hindu society of Bengal. It is in the fitness of things that his birth centenary should be observed all over India and the country should pay homage to an epoch-making personality that he undoubtedly was.

# ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਚਟੋਪਾਧਿਆ

ਐਸ. ਐਸ. ਦੁਸਾਂਝ

ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਭਾਰਤ ਦੇ ਮਹਾਨ ਲੇਖਕਾਂ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਇਕ ਹੈ। ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਸਾਇੰਸ ਇਕੋ ਇਕ ਲੇਖਕ ਹੈ ਜਿਸ ਦੀਆਂ ਰਚਨਾਵਾਂ ਉੱਚ ਸਾਹਿਤਕ ਮਿਆਰ ਕਾਇਮ ਰੱਖਦੀਆਂ ਹੋਈਆਂ ਵੀ ਸਾਧਾਰਨ ਪਾਠਕਾਂ ਦੀ ਪਕੜ ਵਿਚ ਰਹਿੰਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਇਹੀ ਕਾਰਨ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਪਾਠਕਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਅਲੰਚਕਾਂ ਵਲੋਂ ਰੱਜਵਾਂ ਸ਼ੁੱਧਕਾਰ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਹੈ। ਸਰਤ ਦੀਆਂ ਰਚਨਾਵਾਂ ਬਹੁਤ ਸਾਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਕੀਤੀਆਂ ਗਈਆਂ ਹਨ। ਹਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਦੇ ਪਾਠਕਾਂ ਨੇ ਉਸ ਦੀਆਂ ਰਚਨਾਵਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਬੇਗ਼ਾਲੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਦੇ ਪਾਠਕਾਂ ਵਾਂਗ ਹੀ ਪਿਆਰਿਆਂ ਤੇ ਸਤਿਕਾਰਿਆਂ ਹ।

ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਭਾਰਤ ਦਾ ਪਹਿਲਾ ਸਾਹਿਤਕਾਰ ਹੈ ਜਿਸ ਨੇ ਸਾਹਿਤ ਰਚਨਾ ਨੂੰ ਕਿੱਤਾ ਬਣਾਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਰਚਨਾਵਾਂ ਦਾ ਸਿਰ ਤੇ ਹੀ ਸ਼ੋਖਾ ਜੀਵਨ ਨਿਰਬਾਹ ਕੀਤਾ। ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਦਾ ਬਹੁ ਚਰਚਿਤ ਨਾਵਲ ਪਾਥਰ ਦਾਬੀ ਛਪਣ ਤੋਂ ਇਕ ਦਿਨ ਬਾਅਦ ਹੀ ਇਕ ਹਜ਼ਾਰ ਵਿਕ ਗਿਆ ਅਤੇ ੨੦ ਦਿਨਾਂ ਦੇ ਅੰਦਰ ਅੰਦਰ ਹੀ ਇਸ ਨਾਵਲ ਦੀਆਂ ਤਿੰਨ ਹਜ਼ਾਰ ਕਾਪੀਆਂ ਵਿਕ ਗਈਆਂ। ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਨੇ ਇਸ ਨਾਵਲ ਨੂੰ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਰੱਖਣ ਤੇ ਪਾਬੰਦੀ ਲਾ ਦਿਤੀ। ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਤੇ ਮੁਕਦਮਾ ਚਲਾਣ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਵੀ ਸੁੱਚੀ ਗਈ ਪਰ ਮੁਕਦਮਾ ਜਿੱਤ ਕਰਕੇ ਨਾ ਚਲਾਇਆ ਕਿ ਬਾਬੂ ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਇਨ੍ਹੇ ਲੋਕ ਪ੍ਰਿਅ ਹਨ ਕਿ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਕਦੇ ਕਰਨ ਨਾਲ ਸਥਿਤੀ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਦੇ ਵਸ ਤੇ ਬਾਹਰ ਹੋ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ। ਨਾਵਲ ਨੂੰ ਬੇਨ ਕਰਨ ਲੱਗਿਆ ਸਰਕਾਰੀ ਲਿਖਤਾਂ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਇਹ ਤਬ ਸਪਸ਼ਟ ਮਿਲਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਪਾਥਰ ਦਾਬੀ ਦਾ ਲੇਖਕ ਉਸ ਨਾਵਲਕਾਰ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਪਾਠਕਾਂ ਦਾ ਬਹੁਤ ਵੱਡਾ ਘਰਾ ਹੈ।

ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਸੰਸਕ੍ਰਿਤੀ ਕਾਲ ਦਾ ਲੇਖਕ ਹੈ। ਵੀਹਵੀਂ ਸਦੀ ਦੇ ਆਰੰਭ ਵਿਚ ਮਾਰਾ ਭਾਰਤ ਹੀ ਸੰਸਕ੍ਰਿਤੀ ਕਾਲ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਲੰਘ ਰਿਹਾ ਸੀ। ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਰਾਜ ਅਧੀਨ ਭਾਰਤ ਵਿਚ ਨਵੀਂ ਮੱਧ-ਮਰਣੀ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੋ ਰਹੀ ਸੀ। ਆਪਣੇ ਪਿੱਤਰੀ ਕਿੱਤੇ ਤੋਂ ਛੱਡਕੇ ਪੜ੍ਹੇ ਲਿਖੇ ਲੋਕ ਨਵੇਂ ਕਿੱਤੇ ਅਪਣਾਕੇ ਸਹਿਰੀ ਮੱਧ ਸਰੋਣੀ ਦਾ ਭਾਗ ਬਣ ਰਹੇ ਸਨ। ਪੁਰਾਣਾ ਸਾਝੀ ਟੱਬਰਦਾਰੀ ਦਾਲਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਪਰ੍ਹੇ ਪੈ ਰਿਹਾ ਸੀ। ਬੇਗ਼ਾਲੀ ਸਮਾਜ ਵਿਚ ਇਸ ਸਮੇਂ ਤਕ ਸਹਿਰੀ ਮੱਧ ਸਰੋਣੀ ਸਥਾਪਿਤ ਹੋ ਚੁੱਕੀ ਸੀ। ਇਸ ਨਵੀਂ ਮੱਧ-ਮਰਣੀ ਨੂੰ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਦੀ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੀਆਂ ਪਾਰਮਿਕ ਤੇ ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਕੀਮਤਾਂ ਮਾਰੂ ਤੇ ਅਸਹਿ ਲਗਦੀਆਂ ਸਨ। ਪੱਛਮੀ ਸਭਿਆਚਾਰ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵ ਅਧੀਨ ਇਹ ਨਵੀਂ ਮੱਧ ਸਰੋਣੀ ਦੇ ਪਾਤਰ ਵਿਅਕਤੀਗਤ ਸਵਤੰਤਰਤਾ ਮਾਨਣ ਦੇ ਦਿੱਛਕੇ ਸਨ। ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਕਰਨ ਨਾਲ ਸਾਝੀ ਟੱਬਰਦਾਰੀ ਦੀਆਂ ਜਿੰਮੇਵਾਰੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਸਕਤੀ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦੀ। ਪ੍ਰਵਾਦੀ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੀਆਂ ਕੀਮਤਾਂ ਦੇ ਜ਼ਰੂਰਤਾਂ ਤੇ ਰਾਹਤ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਸਥਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਚੁੱਕੀ ਮੱਧ-ਮਰਣੀ ਨੇ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਸਮਾਜ ਦੀ ਸਥਾਪਨਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਵਿਅਕਤੀਗਤ ਸਵਤੰਤਰਤਾ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਨਗੀ ਦਿਤੀ। ਸਥਾਪਤ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਸਮਾਜ ਨਾਲ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਸਮਾਜੀਆਂ ਦਾ ਸਿਧਾਂਤਕ ਸੰਬੰਧ ਚਲ ਪਿਆ। ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਨੇ ਇਸ ਸਥਿਤੀ ਨੂੰ ਬੜੇ ਸਖਮ ਢੰਗ ਨਾਲ ਪਕੜਿਆ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਸਮੇਂ ਨੇ ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਪਰਕਰਣ। ਆਪਣੇ ਨਾਵਲਾਂ ਦਾ ਵਿਸ਼ਾ ਬਣਾਇਆ ਹੈ।

ਹਿੰਦੂ ਸਮਾਜ ਵਿਚ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਸਮਾਜੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਈਸਾਈਆਂ ਵਾਂਗ ਹੀ ਅਧਰਮੀ ਜਾਂ ਮਲੋਛ ਸਮਝਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਸੀ। ਗ੍ਰਹਿ ਦਾਹ ਅਤੇ ਪਾਥਰ ਦਾਬੀ ਵਿਚ ਬਿਹ ਸਥਿਤੀ ਸਪਸ਼ਟ ਹੈ। ਗ੍ਰਹਿ ਦਾਹ ਵਿਚ ਬਾਬੂ ਰਾਮ ਨਾਥ ਪਤਾ ਲਗਣ ਤੇ ਕਿ ਅਚਲਾ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਹੈ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਨੂੰ ਭੀਟ ਗਿਆ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਤ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਪਾਥਰ ਦਾਬੀ ਵਿਚ ਅਪੁਰਵ ਈਸਾਈ ਪਰਮ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਬੰਧ ਰੱਖਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਬੇਗ਼ਾਲਣ ਭਾਵਨਾ ਨੂੰ ਪਿਆਰ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਹੱਥ ਦਾ ਥਾਣ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਮੁੜ ਜਣਾ ਬਹੁਤਰ ਸਮਝਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸਹਿਰੀ ਮੱਧ-ਸਰੋਣੀ ਸਥਾਪਤ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਸਮਾਜ ਤੇ ਆਰਥਕ ਤੌਰ ਤੇ ਨਿਰਭਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ। ਇਸ ਲਈ ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਪਧਰ ਤੇ ਬਿਸ਼ਵਾਸ ਲਈ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਸਮਾਜ ਬਹੁਤਾ ਟਕਸ ਪਦਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ ਕਰ ਸਕਦਾ ਪਰ ਨੀਵੀਂ ਮੱਧ ਸਰੋਣੀ ਲਈ ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਪੱਧਰ ਤੇ ਅਜਿਹੀ ਸਥਿਤੀ ਵੱਡੇ ਕਲਸ ਦਾ ਕਾਟਨ ਬਣ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਸੀ। ਸਹਿਰ ਵਿਚ ਰਹਿੰਦੇ ਅਜਿਹੇ ਨੀਵੀਂ ਮੱਧ ਸਰੋਣੀ ਦੇ ਪਾਤਰ ਪਿੰਡਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਨਾਤਾ ਕਾਇਮ ਰੱਖਣ ਵੇਲੇ ਇਸ ਸੰਸਕ੍ਰਿਤੀ ਕਾਲ ਦੀਆਂ ਕੀਮਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਟਕਰ ਵਿਚ ਪਿਸ ਰਹੇ ਸਨ। ਗ੍ਰਹਿ ਦਾਹ ਦੀ ਅਚਲਾ ਦਾ ਦੁਖਾਤ ਹੀ ਉਸ ਸਮੇਂ ਦਾ ਪਰਦਾ ਹੈ ਜਦੋਂ ਮਹਿਮ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਵਿਆਹ ਕੇ ਪਿੰਡ ਵਿਚ ਲਾ ਆਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਅਚਲਾ ਨਾਲ ਪਿੰਡ ਵਿਚ ਕਿਸ ਦੀ ਈਰਖਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਪਰ ਫਰ ਵੀ ਉਹ ਨਵੀਆਂ ਤੇ ਪੁਰਾਣੀਆਂ ਕੀਮਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਟਕਰ ਵਿਚ ਨਪੀੜਾ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਤਬ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਸਮਾਜ ਤੇ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੇ ਪਾਤਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਟੱਕਰ ਕਾਰਨ ਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਸਗੋਂ ਇਹ ਪਾਤਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਸਰੋਣੀ ਕਿਰਦਾਰ ਕਾਰਨ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਤੱਖ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਗ੍ਰਹਿ ਦਾਹ ਵਿਚ ਸਰੋਣੀ ਕੱਟੜ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਸਰੋਣੀ ਪੱਖ



ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਬਹੁਮੰ ਸਮਾਜੀਆ ਦੇ ਨੇੜੇ ਹੈ। ਇਹੀ ਕਾਰਨ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਸਦਾ ਨਿਜੀ ਪਾਤਰ ਬਹੁਤ ਵੱਡਾ ਸਵੈ ਵਿਰੋਧ ਸੰਭਾਲੀ ਬੈਠਾ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਵਿਸਵਾਸ ਕਾਰਨ ਉਹ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੀਆਂ ਭੂਪਵਾਦੀ ਕੀਮਤਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਬੱਝਿਆ ਰਹਿਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਸਵੈ ਵਿਰੋਧ ਵਿਚ ਉਹ ਆਪ ਤਾਂ ਤਬਾਹ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੀ ਹੈ ਸਗੋਂ ਨਾਲ ਅਚਲਾ ਤੇ ਮਹਿਮ ਦੀ ਤਬਾਹੀ ਦਾ ਕਾਰਨ ਵੀ ਬਣ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ 'ਪਾਥੇਰ ਦਾਬੀ' ਦਾ ਅਪੂਰਵ ਮਧ-ਸਰੋਣੀ ਦੇ ਕਿਰਦਾਰ ਦਾ ਮਾਲਕ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਵਿਸਵਾਸ ਪਖੋਂ ਉਹ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਸਮਾਜ ਨਾਲ ਬੰਝਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਹੈ। ਉਸ ਦੇ ਮਧ-ਸਰੋਣਕ ਕਿਰਦਾਰ ਦੀਆਂ ਕਮਜ਼ੋਰੀਆਂ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਗਵਾਹ ਤਕ ਬਣਾ ਦਿੰਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਪਰ ਕ੍ਰਾਂਤੀਕਾਰੀਆਂ ਹਥੋਂ ਬਚਕੇ ਵੀ ਉਹ ਆਪਣੇ ਘਿਣਾਉਣੇ ਕਿਰਦਾਰ ਤੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਦਾ। ਸਗੋਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਚੇਟ ਆਏ ਹੱਥ ਅਤੇ ਨੱਕਰੀ ਦੇ ਖਤਰੇ ਵਿਚ ਪੈ ਜਾਣ ਦੀ ਹੀ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਉਸਦੇ ਪਾਤਰ ਵਿਚ ਮਧ-ਸਰੋਣਕ ਕਿਰਦਾਰ ਦਾ ਸਵਾਰਥ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਉਹ ਦੇਸ਼ ਕਗਤ ਬਣਨ ਦਾ ਵੀ ਇਛੁਕ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਉਸ ਵਿਚਲਾ ਸਵੈ ਵਿਰੋਧ ਹੀ ਉਸਨੂੰ ਹਾਸੇ ਹੀਣਾ ਬਣਾ ਦਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਮਧ-ਸਰੋਣੀ ਦੇ ਪਾਤਰ ਹਾਸੇ ਹੀਣ ਉਦੋਂ ਪੈਂਦੇ ਹਨ ਜਦੋਂ ਉਹ ਆਪਣੇ ਮਧ-ਸਰੋਣਕ ਕਿਰਦਾਰ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਪੁਰਾਤਨ ਆਦਰਸ਼ ਵੀ ਕਾਇਮ ਰਖਣ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਪਰ ਜਦੋਂ ਇਸ ਸ੍ਰੇਣੀ ਦੇ ਪਾਤਰ ਆਪਣੇ ਕਿਰਦਾਰ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਸਵਾਰਥੀ ਹੋਕੇ ਚਲਦੇ ਹਨ ਤਾਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਕਿਸਮ ਦੀ ਦੁਬਿਧਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਤੇ ਆਪਣਾ ਉਲੂ ਸਿਧਾ ਕਰਦੇ ਚਲ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਦੀ ਮਿਸਾਲ ਸਸ਼ੇਰ ਪ੍ਰੀਥੇ ਚਾ ਤਾਰਕ ਹੈ। ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਨੂੰ ਨੀਵੀਂ ਮਧ ਸਰੋਣੀ ਦੇ ਪਾਤਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਸਮਾਜਕ ਸਥਿਤੀ ਤੇ ਵਿਸ਼ੇਸ਼ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵ ਹਾਸਲ ਹੈ। ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਦੇ ਬਹੁਤੇ ਪਾਤਰ ਇਸ ਨੀਵੀਂ ਮਧ-ਸਰੋਣੀ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਬੰਧ ਰਖਦੇ ਹਨ। ਪੜ੍ਹੀਆਂ ਲਿਖੀਆਂ ਔਰਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਸਮਾਜਕ ਹਾਲਤ ਵੀ ਬਿਸ਼ੇ ਸਰੋਣੀ ਦੇ ਪਾਤਰਾਂ ਸਮਾਨ ਹੈ। ਇਹੋ ਨੀਵੀਂ ਮਧ-ਸਰੋਣੀ ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਦੇ ਨਾਵਲਾਂ ਦਾ ਵਿਸ਼ਾ ਬਣਦੀ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਪਾਠਕਾਂ ਦੀ ਬਹੁ-ਗਿਣਤੀ ਵੀ ਬਿਸ਼ੇ ਸਰੋਣੀ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਬੰਧ ਰਖਦੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਸਰੋਣੀ ਦੀ ਸਥਿਤੀ ਸਾਰੇ ਭਾਰਤ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਇਸ ਪੱਖੋਂ ਸਾਵੀਂ ਸੀ। ਇਹੀ ਕਾਰਨ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਬੰਗਾਲੀ ਦਾ ਲੇਖਕ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਵੀ ਸਾਰੇ ਭਾਰਤੀ ਪਾਠਕਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਡੂੰਘੀ ਸਾਂਝ ਪਾ ਲੈਂਦਾ ਹੈ।

ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਅਗਾਹ ਵਧੂ ਲੇਖਕ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਆਪਣੇ ਸਮਾਜਕ ਸਭਿਆਚਾਰਕ ਵਿਰਸੇ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਉਸਨੂੰ ਟੁਟਣਾ ਪਸੰਦ ਨਹੀਂ। ਭੂਪਵਾਦੀ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੀਆਂ ਕਰੂਰ ਤੇ ਕੱਟੜ ਕੀਮਤਾਂ ਦਾ ਉਹ ਵਿਰੋਧੀ ਹੈ। ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਜਾਣਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਭੂਪਵਾਦੀ ਸਮਾਜ ਵਿਚ ਸਮਾਜਕ ਸਦਾਚਾਰ ਦੇ ਢਾਂਗ ਬੱਲੇ ਅਜਿਹੀਆਂ ਕੀਮਤਾਂ ਸਿਰਜੀਆਂ ਗਈਆਂ ਹਨ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਮਨੁੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਵਾਰਥੀ ਹਿਤਾਂ ਅਧੀਨ ਗੁਲਾਮ ਬਣਾਇਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕੀਮਤਾਂ ਪਿੱਛੇ ਸਵਾਰਥ ਤੋਂ ਬਿਨਾਂ ਕੋਈ ਤਰਕ ਨਹੀਂ। ਲੜਕੀ ਨੂੰ ਤੇਰਾ ਸਾਲਾ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਹੀ ਵਿਆਹ ਦੇਣਾ ਪੁਰਖ ਪਰਧਾਨ ਸਮਾਜ ਨੂੰ ਪ੍ਰਗਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਔਰਤ ਚੇਤਨ ਹੋਣ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਹੀ ਦਾਸੀ ਬਣਾ ਲਈ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ। ਔਰਤ ਦੀ ਲਿੰਗਕ ਪਵਿਤਰਤਾ ਤੇ ਸਾਰਾ ਜ਼ੋਰ ਦੇਣਾ ਵੀ ਸਦਾਚਾਰਕ ਢਾਂਗ ਹੈ। ਇਹੀ ਕਾਰਨ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਲਿੰਗ ਪਵਿਤਰਤਾ ਮਰਦ ਤੇ ਕਰੜਾਈ ਨਾਲ ਲਾਗੂ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ। ਸਮਾਜਕ ਪੱਧਰ ਤੇ ਜੇ ਨਾਰੀ ਦੇ ਸਤੀਤਵ ਦੀ ਗਲ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਮਰਦ ਦੀ ਗੁਲਾਮ ਬਣਾਨ ਤਕ ਸੀਮਤ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਨਾਰੀ ਦੇ ਸਤੀਤਵ ਨੂੰ ਬਹੁਤ ਮਹਤਵ ਦੇ ਕੇ ਵੀ ਰਾਜੀ ਨਹੀਂ। ਜੇ ਨਾਰੀ ਸਤੀਤਵ ਗੁਆ ਕੇ ਵੀ ਮਨੁੱਖੀ ਦਰਦ ਵੰਡਦੀ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਮਾਨਵੀ ਗੁਣ ਰਖਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਦੇ ਨਾਵਲਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਸਤਕਾਰ ਦੀ ਪਾਤਰ ਬਣਦੀ ਹੈ। ਸੇਸ਼ੇਰ ਪ੍ਰੀਥੇ ਦੀ ਸਵਿਤਾ ਅਤੇ ਸਾਰਦਾ ਅਤੇ 'ਸੁਭਦਾ' ਦੀ ਲਲਨਾ ਅਜਿਹੀਆਂ ਇਸਤਰੀਆਂ ਹਨ।

ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਕੋਲ ਮਾਨਵੀ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟੀਕੋਣ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਪੱਖੋਂ ਉਹ ਮਧ-ਸਰੋਣੀ ਦੇ ਸਵਾਰਥੀ ਚਰਿੱਤਰ ਨਾਲ ਸਹਿਮਤ ਨਹੀਂ ਅਤੇ ਸਥਾਪਤ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੇ ਕੱਟੜ ਤੇ ਮਾਨਵਤਾਹੀਣ ਰਵਈਏ ਨੂੰ ਉਹ ਪਸੰਦ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਦਾ। ਪਰ ਇਸ ਗਲ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਗਟਾਵਾ ਸਹਿਜ ਸੁਭਾ ਪਾਤਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਪੇਸ਼ਕਾਰੀ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਹੀ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਗ੍ਰਹਿ ਦਾਹ ਦਾ ਕਿਦਾਰ ਬਾਬੂ ਤੇ ਸੁਰੇਸ਼ ਮਧ-ਸਰੋਣੀ ਦੇ ਸਵਾਰਥੀ ਚਰਿੱਤਰ ਦਾ ਨਮੂਨਾ ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਇਸੇ ਨਾਵਲ ਵਿਚ ਬਾਬੂ ਰਾਮ ਨਾਥ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਕਰੂਰ ਕੱਟੜਤਾ ਦਾ ਨਮੂਨਾ ਪੇਸ਼ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਪਰ ਖੂਬੀ ਦੀ ਗਲ ਇਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਚਿੰਨ੍ਹ ਪਾਤਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਗੋਂ ਜ਼ਿਉਂਦੇ ਜਾਗਦੇ ਪਾਤਰ ਹਨ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਕਈ ਸਥਿਤੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਪਾਠਕ ਸਨੌਹ ਵੀ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ।

ਨੀਵੀਂ ਮਧ ਸਰੋਣੀ ਮੱਧ-ਸਰੋਣੀ ਵਾਂਗ ਬੋਲਗਾਮ ਖੁਲ੍ਹ ਨਹੀਂ ਮਾਣਦੀ। ਇਹ ਸਰੋਣੀ ਆਪਣੇ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੀਆਂ ਮੁੱਢਲੀਆਂ ਆਦਰਸ਼ ਕੀਮਤਾਂ ਦਾ ਸਤਕਾਰ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੋਈ ਉਹ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕੀਮਤਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਬਗਾਵਤ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਜੇ ਇਸ ਸ੍ਰੇਣੀ ਤੋਂ ਜੀਣ ਦੇ ਮਨੁੱਖੀ ਹੱਕ ਵੀ ਖੋਹਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਮਾਨਵੀ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟੀਕੋਣ ਤੋਂ ਕਰੂਰ ਕੀਮਤਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਫੈਸਲਾਕੁਨ ਟੱਕਰ ਲੈਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਤੇ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੀਆਂ ਮੁੱਢਲੀਆਂ ਆਦਰਸ਼ ਕੀਮਤਾਂ ਦਾ ਸਤਕਾਰ ਵੀ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਬਿਨ ਪੱਖ ਵਿਚ ਉਸਦੇ ਪਾਤਰ ਮਹਿਮ, ਮਿਣਾਲ (ਗ੍ਰਹਿ ਦਾਹ), ਸਵੀਤਾ ਸ਼ਾਰਦਾ ਰਾਖਾਲ (ਸੇਸ਼ੇਰ ਪ੍ਰੀਥੇ), ਆਦਿ ਪ੍ਰਤੱਖ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਣ ਹਨ। ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਮਾਨਵੀ ਹਰ ਪਾਤਰ ਨੂੰ ਮਨੁੱਖੀ ਪੱਧਰ ਤੇ ਚਿਤਰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਉਸ ਦਾ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟੀਕੋਣ ਮਾਨਵੀ ਅਤੇ ਤਾਰਕਿਕ ਹੈ। ਇਹੀ ਕਾਰਨ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਨੀਵੀਂ ਮੱਧ-ਸਰੋਣੀ ਦਾ ਚਹੁੱਤਾ ਲੇਖਕ ਹੋਣ ਦੇ ਬਾਵਜੂਦ ਵੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਵਰਗ ਜਾਂ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਪਾਠਕਾਂ ਵਲੋਂ ਤ੍ਰਿਸਕਾਰਿਆ ਨਹੀਂ ਗਿਆ। ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਰਚਨਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਕਿਸੇ ਸਰੋਣੀ ਧਰਮ ਜਾਂ ਵਰਗ ਨੂੰ ਨਹੀਂ ਤ੍ਰਿਸਕਾਰਿਆ ਸਗੋਂ ਮਾਨਵੀ-ਤਰਕ ਪੱਖੋਂ ਕਰੂਰ ਰੁਚੀਆਂ ਜਾਂ ਕੀਮਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵਿਸ਼ਲੇਸ਼ਣੀ ਪੱਧਰ ਤੇ ਨੰਗਾ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੈ ਬਿਨਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਭਿੰਨ ਭੇਦ ਦੇ ਮਾਨਵ-ਹਿਤ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟੀਕੋਣ ਦੀ ਸਲਾਘਾ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ।

ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਨਾਵਲਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਆਮ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਮਾਜਕ ਸਦਾਚਾਰਕ ਸਮਸਿਆਵਾਂ ਹੀ ਛੁਹੀਆਂ ਹਨ । ਪਰ 'ਪਾਥਰ ਦਾਬੀ' ਵਿਚ ਮਸਲਾ ਨਿਰੋਲ ਰਾਜਨੀਤਕ ਲਿਆ ਹੈ । ਇਹ ਨਾਵਲ ਦਸਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਦੀ ਰਾਜਨੀਤਕ ਸਥਿਤੀ ਤੇ ਵੀ ਪਕੜ ਕਮਾਲ ਦੀ ਹੈ । ਇਸ ਨਾਵਲ ਵਿਚ ਡਾਕਟਰ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਕ੍ਰਾਂਤੀ ਲਬੀ ਜਥੇਬੰਦ ਕਰਦਾ ਅਤੇ ਉਹ ਆਪਣੀ ਜਥੇਬੰਦੀ ਲਈ ਕਿਸਾਨਾਂ ਮਜ਼ਦੂਰਾਂ ਤੇ ਨਿਰਭਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਦਾ ਸਗੋਂ ਮੱਧ ਸਰੋਣੀ ਅਤੇ ਨੀਵੀਂ ਮੱਧ ਸਰੋਣੀ ਦੇ ਚੇਤਨ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਜਥੇਬੰਦੀ ਦਾ ਆਧਾਰ ਬਣਾਦਾ ਹੈ । ਉਹ ਕ੍ਰਾਂਤੀ ਲਈ ਜਨਤਕ ਜਥੇਬੰਦੀ ਦਾ ਰਾਹ ਛੱਡਕੇ ਚੰਦ ਚੇਤਨ ਬੰਦਿਆਂ ਤੇ ਨਿਰਭਰ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਜਥੇਬੰਦੀ ਤੋਂ ਡਿਕਟੇਟਰਾਨਾ ਅਨੁਸ਼ਾਸਨ ਦੀ ਵੀ ਮੰਗ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ । ਅਪੂਰਵ ਵਰਗੇ ਤਾਂ ਦਹਿਸ਼ਤ ਦਾ ਇਕ ਝਟਕਾ ਵੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਹਾਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਅਤੇ ਜਥੇਬੰਦੀ ਦੇ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ ਮੈਂਬਰ ਵੀ ਹੌਲੀ ਹੌਲੀ ਕਿਰਨਾ ਸ਼ੁਰੂ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ । ਕੁਝ ਨੂੰ ਤਾਂ ਡਾਕਟਰ ਦਾ ਡਿਕਟੇਟਰਾ ਵਾਗ ਬਿਨਾ ਕਾਰਨ ਦਸੇ ਅਪੂਰਵ ਦੀ ਗਦਾਰੀ ਨੂੰ ਮਾਫ਼ ਕਰਨਾ ਪਸੰਦ ਨਹੀਂ । ਸੁਮਿਤਰਾ ਸਮਗਲਰਾ ਨਾਲ ਨਾਤਾ ਰਖਦੀ ਸੀ, ਸਪਸ਼ਟ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਐਡਵੋਚਰ ਕਾਰਨ ਹੀ ਜੁੜੀ ਹੋਈ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਜਦੋਂ ਉਸਨੂੰ ਅੰਨੀ ਜਾਇਦਾਦ ਵਿਰਸੇ ਵਿਚ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋਣ ਦੀ ਸੂਚਨਾ ਮਿਲਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਵੀ 'ਪਾਥਰ ਦਾਬੀ' ਸੰਸਥਾ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਖ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ । ਭਾਰਤੀ ਈਸਾਈ ਧਰਮ ਨਾਲ ਸਬੰਧ ਰਖਦੀ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ਾ ਨਾਲ ਗ਼ੈਰ ਮਨੁੱਖੀ ਹੋਣਾ ਪਸੰਦ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਦੀ । ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਸਥਿਤੀ ਵਿਚ ਜਿਥੇ ਕ੍ਰਾਂਤੀਕਾਰੀ ਦਲ ਦੀਆਂ ਮੁਦਲੀਆਂ ਕਮਜ਼ੋਰੀਆਂ ਵਲ ਧਿਆਨ ਦੁਆਦਾ ਹੈ ਉਥੇ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ ਹਕੂਮਤ ਵਿਰੁਧ ਛੋਟੀਆਂ ਛੋਟੀਆਂ ਘਟਨਾਵਾਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਬਗ਼ਾਵਤ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਚੇਤਨਤਾ ਵੀ ਪਰਦਾਨ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ ।

ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਦਾ ਕਮਾਲ ਇਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਨਾਵਲਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਫੈਸਲੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਦਾ । ਸਥਿਤੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਹਲ ਨਹੀਂ ਪਰਚਾਰਦਾ ਸਗੋਂ ਸਮਸਿਆ ਪ੍ਰਤੀ ਪੂਰੀ ਚੇਤਨਤਾ ਦਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ । ਪਾਤਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਹਰ ਡਾਈਮੈਨਸ਼ਨ ਨੂੰ ਸਾਕਾਰ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ । ਇਹੀ ਕਾਰਨ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਦੇ ਨਾਵਲਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਕਿਸੇ ਪਾਤਰ ਨਾਲ ਵੀ ਘਿਰਣਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੁੰਦੀ । ਮਾੜੇ ਪਾਤਰ ਮਾੜੇਪਣ ਦਾ ਮੁਜ਼ਸਮਾ ਬਣ ਪੇਸ਼ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦੇ । ਹਰ ਪਾਤਰ ਜੀਵੇ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਵਾਗ ਸਮੇਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਸਥਿਤੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਚੰਗੇ ਤੇ ਮੰਦੇ ਕਰਮਾਂ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਗਟਾ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ । ਸਰਤ ਪਾਤਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਘੜਦਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਗੋਂ ਜਿੰਦਗੀ ਵਾਗ ਉਸਾਰਦਾ ਹੈ । ਪਾਤਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਚਰਿੱਤਰ ਨੂੰ ਫਤਵਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਨਹੀਂ ਪੰਸ ਕਰਦਾ ਸਗੋਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਕਰਮਾਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਪਾਠਕਾਂ ਦੀ ਸਮਝ ਨੂੰ ਹੀ ਹਲੂਣਾ ਦਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ ।

ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਦੇ ਪਾਤਰ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਅਨੁਭਵ ਦੇ ਦਾਇਰੇ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਹਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦੇ । ਹਰ ਪਾਤਰ ਆਪਣੀ ਸਰੋਣੀ ਤੇ ਸਮਾਜਕ ਆਰਥਕ ਹਾਲਾਤ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਸਮੁੱਚੇ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਪੇਸ਼ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ , ਸਰਤ ਹਰ ਪਾਤਰ ਦੇ ਮਨ ਅੰਦਰ ਲਹਿ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ । ਪਾਤਰਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਕਮੀਨੀਆਂ ਸੋਚਾਂ, ਕਮੀਨੇਂ ਕਰਮ ਉਸ ਤੋਂ ਲੁਕੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਰਹਿੰਦੇ ਪਰ ਇਹ ਸਭ ਕੁਝ ਇੰਨੇ ਮਨੁੱਖੀ ਪੱਧਰ ਤੇ ਉਘੜਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਿਰਫ ਸਥਿਤੀ ਦਾ ਯਥਾਰਥ ਹੀ ਪਰਤੀਤ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ । ਸਮਾਜਕ ਸਤਿਯੋਤਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਸਥਿਤੀ ਦੀ ਏਨੀ ਯਥਾਰਥਕ ਪਕੜ-ਇਸ ਪੱਖੋਂ ਸਰਤ ਦਾ ਸਾਨੀ ਲੱਭਣਾ ਕਠਨ ਲਗਦਾ ਹੈ । ਬਹੁਤ ਥੋੜੇ ਪੰਨਿਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਨਾਵਲ ਨੂੰ ਵਿਸ਼ਾਲ ਸਮਾਜਕ ਚਿਤਰਪਟ ਦੇ ਦੇਣਾ ਇਹ ਸਰਤ ਦਾ ਹੀ ਕਮਾਲ ਹੈ । ਸਰਤ ਦੀ ਡੂੰਘੀ ਨੀਝ ਅਤੇ ਤੀਖਣ ਸੂਝ ਪਾਠਕ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਾਜਕ ਸਥਿਤੀ ਦੇ ਸਨਮੁਖ ਖੜਾ ਕਰ ਦਿੰਦੀ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਪਾਠਕ ਨਾਵਲ ਦੇ ਪੰਨਿਆਂ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਹੀ ਕਹਾਣੀ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਕਿਤੇ ਵੱਧ ਸਮਾਜਕ ਚਿਤਰਪਟ ਦੀ ਵਿਆਲਤਾ ਨੂੰ ਵੇਖ ਲੈਂਦਾ ਹੈ ।

# Saratchandra Chattopadhyay

Surinder Sing Dosanj

Saratchandra Chattopadhyay is one of the greatest writers of India. Perhaps he is the only Indian writer who has maintained a high literary standard and remained the author of people's heart. His works have been very well received by the literary critics and the readers, and have been translated in many languages. Readers of other Indian languages love and respect Saratchandra like his Bengali readers. Because of his intimate knowledge of the contemporary life and his tirade against the feudal values and rank exploitation of the women and the lowly poor, yet keeping his pages free from rancour and pettiness, he became one of the most widely read novelists of India.

Saratchandra is the first Indian writer who made literary writings a profession and lived nicely on the returns of his books. His most talked about novel *Pathēr Dābī* was sold one thousand overnight after its publication. Its first edition of 3,000 was sold within twenty days of its publication. *Pathēr Dābī* was banned by the British Government. They wanted to prosecute Saratchandra too under section 124(a) of I.P.C. But the Government desisted from such a step, because they visualized that his arrest could have resulted in worsening the situation. The Government was convinced of his popularity, as is clear from the documents exchanged between the Advocate General, Shri B. L. Mitter, the Chief Secretary, Mr. W. Prentice and Hon'ble member Nawab Ali. To quote a few lines from the note of the Advocate General: "I have carefully read the book *Pathēr Dābī*. The author is the foremost novelist in Bengal and is widely read". To quote Hon'ble member Nawab Ali: "I agree we should proscribe the book under 99(A) of I.P.C. But as the author is a novelist of some repute and more is likely to be heard of the matter, the case should be submitted to H.E. (The Governor)."

Saratchandra is the writer of the transitional period. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the whole of the Indian society was passing through an era of transition. Under the British rule a new middle class was rising. The newly educated middle class was leaving age-old hereditary professions and was adopting new ones in different spheres of life. The traditional joint family system was disintegrating. In Bengal, the new middle class had established itself. The religious and social feudal values were intolerable to this class. Under the influence of

Western culture, the rising Indian middle class was heading towards individualism as this could also liberate them from the responsibilities of the joint family system. The established middle class gave birth to Brahmo Samaj. Brahmo Samaj not only liberated the educated class from the cruel clutches of feudal religious superstitions and traditional sense of values but also accorded respectability to the rising individualism. A theoretical conflict started between the traditional Hinduism and the philosophy of the newly emerged Brahmo Samaj. Saratchandra captured this transitional situation at the right moment and in the right manner.

In the traditional Hindu Society, Brahmo Samajis were considered 'Mlechhas' like Christians. This is clearly revealed in Saratchandra's famous novel *Gṛhadāha* and *Pathēr Dābī*. In *Gṛhadāha*, Rām Bābu considers himself polluted when he learns that Achalā is a Brahmo Samaji. In *Pathēr Dābī*, Apūrba loves a Christian Bengali girl, Bhāratī but would rather die than eat from her hands. The middle class people were economically not dependent on the old Hindu traditional society. So at the social level, the Hindu society could not create any trouble for them. But the situation for the lower middle class was not that easy. Living in cities, the lower middle class character, could not break their contact with the village life. In such a situation such characters would feel miserable in the conflict arising out of the incompatibility of modern life and the structure of the old Hindu society. In *Gṛhadāha* the tragedy of Achalā occurs after her marriage, when she is required to adjust in the village life. The characters living in the village have no malice against Achalā's person, but even then she is crushed in the conflict of the new and the old values. Such a situation arises not only because of the conflict between the characters belonging to the Brahmo Samaj and the traditional Hindu society, but also due to the class characteristics of the characters. In *Gṛhadāha*, Surēs belongs to traditional Hindu family, but as a class he is near to that of the Brahmo Samajis. This is the reason that Surēs is a character of self contradictions. As a middle class character he wants to enjoy individual freedom just like Brahmo Samajis but as far as his beliefs go, he is tied to the feudal values of the Hindu society. Due to this contradiction in his character, he not only ruins himself, but also brings havoc on Achalā and Mahim. In *Pathēr Dābī*, Apūrba is a middle class character, but his beliefs are those of the old Hindu society. He has all the weaknesses of a middle class character. Under threat to his service he becomes informer of the police and betrays his revolutionary comrades. He is caught by the revolutionaries and they wish to do away with his life as a punishment for the betrayal. However, he is saved by Miss Bhāratī and the Doctor Sabyasāchī. He never feels sorry for his conduct. He feels least indebted for the mercy shown by the Doctor and Miss Bhāratī, rather he blames Miss Bhāratī for introducing him to such a gang of brutes. He complains about the injury he received in the hand joint and feels worried about his job. He is weak and selfish but at the same time he wants to be a patriot. This contradiction in his character makes a fool of him. The middle class characters become ridiculous only when they want to retain the idealism of the old Hindu society. But when they are true to their class character, they never feel any conflict. They achieve their targets by being even utmost selfish. Tārak of *Śēṣer Parichaya* is a glaring example of this observation. Saratchandra has a great grip on the middle class, and specially the lower middle class characters. He has complete control over such social situations as that of the lower middle class characters. Mostly this lower class becomes the subject matter of Saratchandra's fiction and his novels remain a passionate and profound commentary on the characters drawn from this class. Majority of his readers also belong to this class. The social situation of this class was typically the same all over India at that time. This is the reason that Saratchandra, being a Bengali novelist, became popular amongst the readers of the whole of India.

Saratchandra is a progressive writer but he does not want to be cut off from the social

and cultural heritage. He has uncompromising attitude towards the rigid and inhuman feudal values. Saratchandra was fully convinced of the hoax of feudal ethics under which the privileged ones exploited women and the toiling masses. He does not find any logic behind the superstitious religious feudal values where human beings are treated as the untouchables. Marriage of the woman at pre-puberty stage suits the man-dominated society as she becomes a slave before becoming conscious of the weal and woe of life.

In the feudal concept, women are considered pieces of property, or slaves. The sexual lapse on the part of women was considered an unforgivable crime. This is nothing but an ethical hoax of the feudal society as the same sexual lapse on the part of men is never taken that seriously. Saratchandra does not take seriously such concept of chastity of women which makes them slaves of menfolk.

"Saratchandra rebelled against the ignoble feudal concept of chastity, raising his pointed finger at it. According to him this concept has been actuated by the property interest of men in the patriarchal society and this is why the novelist emphasises that it would be essentially wrong to regard someone as unchaste only for one's sexual lapses". "Full grown humanity is nobler than physical chastity. That is what he upholds and his stories unfold". Nobility of womanhood is something much more and much greater than physical chastity. Sabitā and Sārādā of *Śēṣēr Parichaya* and Lalanā of *Sūbhadā* clearly illustrate this concept.

Saratchandra has a humanist point of view and because of this he does not approve of the selfish attitude of the middle class characters as also the rigid inhuman attitude of the tradition bound bigoted Hindu characters. This is artistically presented in the delineation of characters. Kēdār Bābu and Surēś of *Gṛhadāha* represent the innate selfishness of the middle class characters. In the same novel, Rām Bābu represents feudal religious superstitions; but Saratchandra's consummate art lies in the fact that these characters are not mere symbols of the class they represent, but are living human beings who, with all the weaknesses and the flaws in their characters, are in certain situations and at certain moments loved by the readers.

The lower middle class does not enjoy the uncontrolled freedom of the middle class. The lower middle class, while respecting the basic ideals of the society, revolts against those social values which infringe upon their human rights. Saratchandra is a staunch humanist and has an uncompromising stance against the inhumanistic cruel values of the feudal society and the selfishness of the newly emergent middle class. His characters Mahim and Mṛṇāl of *Gṛhadāh*, Sārādā, Sabitā and Rākhāl of *Śēṣēr Parichaya* stand testimony to this. Saratchandra's characterization is humanistic and logical. All his characters are living beings with all their grandeur and weaknesses. No doubt Saratchandra was a favourite of the lower middle class, but he was no less popular with the readers of other classes and religions. Being humanist and secular in approach, he was not hostile to any class, sect or religion, he only exposed analytically the inhuman attitudes and values, and exalted the human values without any discrimination.

In general, Saratchandra has dealt with social and ethical problems in his novels; but in *Pathēr Dābī* the problem is mainly political. From the perusal of this novel one can construe that his understanding about the political situation is equally commendable. Doctor Sahyasācī of this novel forms a revolutionary organisation basing it upon the intelligentsia of the middle and lower middle classes, discarding labour and the peasantry. He depends on a few conscious persons rather than on organized masses for bringing in the revolution. He imposes dictatorial discipline on the comrades of this group, which they resent. Apūrba breaks down under the threat of torture at the hands of the police and becomes an informer. Some others like Brajendra do not approve

of the mercy subsequently shown to Apūrba by the Doctor. Sumitrā was previously a member of a smugglers' group and it is likely that she was involved with the revolutionaries because of the adventurism inherent in her spirit ; she leaves the Pathēr Dābi upon learning that she has inherited immense wealth. Another member, Bhārati, being a Christian, is hesitant to fully adopt the anti-British attitude of the Pathēr Dābi.

Thus, while exposing the inherent weaknesses of this petty bourgeois group of revolutionaries, Saratchandra also imparts consciousness to his readers against the tyranny of foreign rule.

Saratchandra is a litterateur who does not pronounce decisions or propagate a solution to any problem, but he imparts full understanding of the problem giving analytical exposures. His characters are multi-dimensional, vibrant, throbbing with life ; they are not embodiments of vices and virtues. Every character is placed in a social milieu which governs his behaviour—at times good, at other times bad. His characters are not puppets in his hands, but are lifelike creatures. Saratchandra does not propound his theories through the mouths of his characters, but imparts a heightened awakening in the consciousness of the readers through the actions of his characters. Saratchandra is unparalleled in capturing social reality and in doing an in-depth study of the human mind.

He knows the art of capturing the vast panorama of society in a few pages. With his deep observation and sharp vision he brings the reader face to face with the contemporary social situation and the readers' grasp about the reality of society is enhanced and new vistas open up before his eyes.



# ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਦੇ ਨਾਵਲਾਂ ਦਾ ਵਿਵੇਕ

ਟੀ. ਆਰ. ਵਿਨੋਦ

ਬੰਗਾਲੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਦੇ ਮਹਾਨ ਗਲਪਕਾਰ ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ (੧੮੭੬-੧੯੩੮) ਅਤੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਰਚਨਾਵਾਂ ਭਾਰਤੀ ਸਮਾਜਕ ਵਿਕਾਸ ਦੇ ਉਸ ਦੌਰ ਦੀ ਪੈਦਾਵਾਰ ਹਨ ਜਦੋਂ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਸਾਮਰਾਜ ਵਿਰੁੱਧ ੧੮੫੭ ਦਾ ਭਾਰਤੀ ਸਾਮੰਤਵਾਦੀ ਵਿਦਰੋਹ ਅਸਫਲ ਰਹਿ ਜਾਣ ਉਪਰੰਤ ਸਮੁੱਚੇ ਭਾਰਤ ਉੱਤੇ ਸਾਮਰਾਜੀ ਹਕੂਮਤ ਕਾਇਮ ਹੋ ਚੁੱਕੀ ਸੀ ਅਤੇ ਸਾਮਰਾਜ ਨੇ ਭਾਰਤੀ ਸਾਮੰਤਵਾਦੀ ਸੰਸਥਾਵਾਂ ਤੇ ਸੰਸਕ੍ਰਿਤੀ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਹਿਤਾਂ ਲਈ ਕਾਇਮ ਰੱਖਣ ਦੀ ਨੀਤੀ ਅਪਣਾ ਲਈ ਸੀ। ਤਾਂ ਵੀ, ਰਾਜ ਦੀ ਇਸ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਕਿਰਿਆਵਾਦੀ ਨੀਤੀ ਦੇ ਬਾਵਜੂਦ, ਪੱਛਮੀ ਸੰਸਕ੍ਰਿਤੀ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵਾਂ ਵਜੋਂ ਨਵੀਂ ਭਾਰਤੀ ਮੱਧ ਸ਼੍ਰੇਣੀ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੋ ਰਹੀ ਸੀ। ਸਾਮੰਤਵਾਦੀ ਸਮੇਂ ਦੇ ਅਮੀਰ ਅਤੇ ਉਚ-ਜਾਤੀਏ ਲੋਕ ਨਵੀਂ ਵਿਦਿਆ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਕਰਕੇ ਨਵੇਂ ਕੰਮ-ਧੰਦੇ ਅਪਨਾਉਣ ਲਗ ਪਏ ਸਨ ਅਤੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਕਸਬਿਆਂ ਤੇ ਸ਼ਹਿਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਵਸੇ ਸਨ ਜਿੱਥੇ ਪੱਛਮੀ ਸੰਸਕ੍ਰਿਤੀ ਦੇ ਅਸਰਾਂ ਅਧੀਨ ਵਸਤੂ-ਜਗਤ ਪ੍ਰਤੀ ਮੋਹ ਅਤੇ ਧਰਮ-ਨਿਰਪੇਖਤਾ ਦਾ ਵਾਤਾਵਰਨ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੋਣ ਲਗ ਪਿਆ ਸੀ।

ਨਵੀਂ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੋ ਰਹੀ ਮੱਧ ਸ਼੍ਰੇਣੀ ਦਾ ਪੱਛਮੀਕਰਣ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਤੱਥ ਦੀ ਸੋਝੀ ਕਰਵਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਸੀ ਕਿ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਉਦੇਸ਼ ਕੇਵਲ ਆਜ਼ਾਦ ਭਾਰਤ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਪੂਰੇ ਹੋ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਭਾਰਤ ਦੀ ਆਜ਼ਾਦੀ ਆਧੁਨਿਕ ਲੋਕਰਾਜੀ ਸੰਸਥਾਵਾਂ ਤੇ ਸੰਸਕ੍ਰਿਤੀ ਦੇ ਅਪਣਾਉਣ ਨਾਲ ਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਕੀਤੀ ਤੇ ਸੁਰੱਖਿਅਤ ਰੱਖੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ, ਉਸ ਦੌਰ ਦਾ ਬੁਨਿਆਦੀ ਅੰਤ੍ਰ-ਵਿਰੋਧ ਸਾਮਰਾਜੀ-ਸਾਮੰਤਵਾਦੀ ਗਠਜੋੜ ਅਤੇ ਲੋਕ-ਰਾਜੀ ਸਕਤੀਆਂ ਵਿਚਕਾਰ ਸੀ। ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਦੇ ਨਾਵਲਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਵੇਕ ਦਾ ਮੂਲ ਆਧਾਰ ਉਸੇ ਬੁਨਿਆਦੀ ਅੰਤ੍ਰ-ਵਿਰੋਧ ਦਾ ਹੀ ਇਕ ਰੂਪ ਹੈ।

ਇਹ ਰੂਪ ਲੋਕ-ਰਾਜੀ ਧਾਰਨਾਵਾਂ ਦੇ ਸੰਦਰਭ ਵਿਚ ਬਦਲ ਰਹੇ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੀ-ਜ਼ਮੀਂਦਾਰਾਂ ਸਮਾਜ ਵਿਚਲੇ ਇਸਤ੍ਰੀ-ਪੁਰਸ-ਸੰਬੰਧਾਂ ਦਾ ਹੈ। ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੀ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੀਆਂ ਸਾਸਕ੍ਰਿਤਿਕ ਕਦਰਾਂ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਇਸਤ੍ਰੀ ਅਤੇ ਪੁਰਸ਼ ਦਾ ਮਿਲਾਪ ਮਾਪਿਆ ਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਣਿਤ ਵਿਆਹ ਦੇ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਸਦਾਚਾਰਕ ਸਮਝਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਸੀ। ਇਸਤ੍ਰੀ-ਪੁਰਸ਼ ਦੇ ਪਰਸਪਰ ਆਕਰਸ਼ਣ (ਪ੍ਰੇਮ) ਤੇ ਆਧਾਰਤ ਵਿਆਹ-ਬਾਹਰੇ ਸੰਬੰਧਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਤਾਂ ਸਮਾਜਕ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਨਗੀ ਮਿਲਣੀ ਹੀ ਕੀ ਸੀ, ਉਸ ਸਮਾਜ ਵਿਚ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ-ਸੰਬੰਧਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਬੱਝੇ ਇਸਤ੍ਰੀ-ਪੁਰਸ਼ਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਆਹ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਕਰਨਾ ਵੀ ਕੁਫਰ ਸਮਝਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਸੀ। ਸਮਾਜ ਦੇ ਮੁਖ ਆਰਥਿਕ ਆਧਾਰ, 'ਜ਼ਮੀਨ' ਉੱਤੇ ਪੁਰਸ਼ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਾਈਵੇਟ ਕਬਜ਼ਾ ਹੋਣ ਕਾਰਨ ਪੁਰਸ਼ ਅਤੇ ਇਸਤ੍ਰੀ ਵਿਚਕਾਰ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਣਿਤ ਸੰਬੰਧ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾਲੂ ਮਾਲਕ ਅਤੇ ਵਫ਼ਾਦਾਰ ਦਾਸੀ ਵਾਲੇ ਸਨ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਬੁਨਿਆਦੀ ਸੰਬੰਧਾਂ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੋ ਕੇ, ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਹੀ ਪੱਕੇ ਪੌਰੀ ਖੜਾ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲੀਆਂ ਸਾਸਕ੍ਰਿਤਿਕ ਕਦਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਸਥਾਪਿਤਵ ਲਈ ਸਮਾਜਕ ਦੇਵ-ਵਿਧਾਨ ਹੀ ਕਾਫੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ, ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਅੰਤ੍ਰ-ਵਰਤਨ ਦੀ ਵੀ ਲੋੜ ਸੀ। ਸੋ ਵਿਅਕਤੀ ਦਾ ਸਮਾਜੀਕਰਣ ਇਸ ਭਾਤ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਸੀ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਕਦਰਾਂ ਉਸ ਦੀ ਚੇਤਨਾ ਦਾ ਅਟੁੱਟ ਅੰਗ ਬਣ ਜਾਣੀਆਂ ਸਨ ਅਤੇ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਪੂਰਤੀ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਹੀ ਉਸਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਵਿਅਕਤਿਤਵ ਦੀ ਤ੍ਰਿਪਤੀ ਅਨੁਭਵ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਸੀ। ਪਰਿਣਾਮ-ਸਰੂਪ ਅਜੇਹੇ ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਪਰਿਵੇਸ਼ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂਮੇ-ਪਲੇ ਮੁੰਡ-ਕੁੜੀਆਂ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਜਾਂ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ-ਵਿਆਹ ਦਾ ਸਪਨਾ ਲੈਣਾ ਵੀ ਗੁਨਾਹ ਸਮਝਦੇ ਸਨ ਜਿਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੇ ਸਥਾਪਿਤ ਮੁੱਲ-ਵਿਧਾਨ ਵਿਚ ਕਿਸੇ ਯਾਤ ਦੀ ਉੱਥਲ ਪੁੱਥਲ ਦੀ ਗੁੰਜਾਇਸ਼ ਬਹੁਤ ਘੱਟ ਸੀ।

ਪਰ ਪੱਛਮੀ ਸੰਸਕ੍ਰਿਤੀ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵਾਂ ਵਜੋਂ ਇਸਤ੍ਰੀ-ਪੁਰਸ਼ ਵਿਚਕਾਰ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ-ਸੰਬੰਧ ਸਦਾਚਾਰਕ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਨਗੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਕਰਨ ਲਗ ਪਏ ਸਨ ਜਿਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਪੁਰਾਤਨ ਅਤੇ ਨੀਵੀਂ ਪੀੜ੍ਹੀ ਵਿਚਕਾਰ ਬਾਹਰਮੁਖੀ ਟਕਰਾਅ ਦੀ ਸੰਭਾਵਨਾ ਹੀ ਪੈਦਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋ ਗਈ ਸੀ ਸਗੋਂ ਨਵੀਂ ਪੀੜ੍ਹੀ ਦੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਮਨ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪੁਰਾਤਨ ਅਤੇ ਨਵੀਨ ਸਾਸਕ੍ਰਿਤਿਕ ਕਦਰਾਂ ਵਿਚਕਾਰ ਤਨਾਅ ਦੀ ਸਥਿਤੀ ਉਤਪੰਨ ਹੋ ਗਈ ਸੀ। ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਦੀ ਵਿਲੱਖਣਤਾ ਇਹ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਗਲਪ ਰਚਨਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਪੁਰਾਤਨ ਅਤੇ ਨਵੀਨ ਸੰਸਕ੍ਰਿਤੀ ਦਾ ਦਵੇਦ ਮਾਨਸਿਕ ਤਨਾਅ ਦੇ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਮੂਰਤੀਮਾਨ ਹੋਇਆ ਹੈ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦਾ ਗਲਪ-ਬੋਧ ਸੁਧਾਰਵਾਦੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ, ਨਾਇਕ-ਪੱਖ ਦੇ ਵਿਦਰੋਹ ਦੀ ਸਫਲਤਾ ਜਾਂ ਖਲ-ਨਾਇਕ ਪੱਖ ਦੇ ਕਾਇਆ-ਕਲਪ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਸਮੱਸਿਆ-ਸਮਾਧਾਨ ਦੀ ਸਰਲ ਜਿਹੀ ਵਿਧੀ ਦਾ ਸਿਕਾਰ ਨਹੀਂ। ਉਹ ਆਪਣੇ ਨਾਇਕ-ਨਾਇਕਾਵਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਨਵੀਨ ਕਦਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਆਦਰਸ਼-ਟਾਈਪ ਬਣਾਕੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਚਿਤਰਦੇ, ਸਗੋਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵਿਭਿੰਨ ਅਤੇ ਵਿਰੋਧੀ ਸਾਸਕ੍ਰਿਤਿਕ ਕਦਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਤਨਾਅ ਦੀ ਗੁੰਝਲਦਾਰ ਪ੍ਰਕਿਰਿਆ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਲੰਘਾਉਂਦੇ ਹੋਏ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਮਾਨਸਿਕ ਉਤਾਰ-ਚੜ੍ਹਾ ਦਾ ਸੂਖਮ 'ਤਰ' ਪੇਸ਼ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਮਿਸਾਲ ਵਜੋਂ, 'ਦੇਵਦਾਸ' ਵਿਚ ਦੇਵਦਾਸ ਪਾਰਵਤੀ ਨੇ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਨਾਲ 'ਮਾਪਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਆਗਿਆ-ਪਾਲਣ' ਦਾ ਆਦਰਸ਼ ਵੀ ਰੱਖਦਾ ਹੈ। ਜਿਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਹ ਆਪਣੇ ਪਰੰਪਰਾਵਾਦੀ ਮਾਪਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਇੱਛਾ ਦੇ ਵਿਰੁੱਧ ਨਹੀਂ ਜਾਂਦਾ। ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਇਕ ਕਦਰ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਨਿਧ ਬਣਾਕੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਚਿਤਰਦੇ ਸਗੋਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਮਨ ਦੀ ਦੁਬਿਧਾ



ਦਾ ਚਿਤਰ ਪੇਸ਼ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਇਹੀ ਦੁਬਿਧਾ ਉਸਦੀ ਮਾਨਸਿਕ ਪੀੜਾ ਦਾ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਡਾ ਕਾਰਨ ਬਣਦੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸੇ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ 'ਦੱਤਾਂ' ਦੀ ਨਾਇਕਾ ਵਿਜਿਆ ਦਾ ਵਰਤਾਰਾ ਵੀ ਵਿਲਾਸ ਬਿਹਾਰੀ ਅਤੇ ਨਰੇਂਦਰ ਪ੍ਰਤੀ ਆਕਰਸ਼ਣ ਅਤੇ ਵਿਕਰਸ਼ਣ ਦੇ ਤਨਾਓ ਤੋਂ ਪ੍ਰੇਰਿਤ ਹੈ।

ਵਿਧਵਾ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਸੰਗ ਵਿਚ ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਤਨਾਓ ਹੋਰ ਵੀ ਸੰਘਣਾ ਹੋ ਨਿਬੜਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸਾਮੰਤਵਾਦੀ ਸਮਾਜਿਕ-ਸਾਸਕ੍ਰਿਤਕ ਮਰਿਆਦਾ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਵਿਧਵਾ ਲਈ ਪਰ-ਪੁਰਸ ਦਾ ਖਿਆਲ ਵੀ ਵਿਵਰਜਿਤ ਹੈ ਇਸ ਮੁੱਲ ਦਾ ਅੰਤ੍ਰ-ਵਰਤਨ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਵਲਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਵਿਧਵਾ ਨਾਇਕਾਵਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣਾ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਣਿਤ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਸਥਾਨਾਤਰਿਤ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਮਜ਼ਬੂਰ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਅਤੇ ਇਸ ਸਥਾਨਾਤਰਣ ਕਾਰਨ ਹੀ ਉਹ ਜੀਵਨ ਭਰ ਪੀੜਾ ਭਗਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਬੜੀ ਦੀਦੀ ਦੀ ਨਾਇਕਾ ਮਾਧਬੀ ਦਾ ਪਰ-ਨਿਰਭਰ ਤੇ ਨਿਰਫਲ ਸੁਰੇਂਦਰ ਨਾਥ ਪ੍ਰਤੀ ਸਹਿਜ ਆਕਰਸ਼ਣ 'ਭਾਈ-ਭੈਣ' ਦੇ ਕਰੁਣ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਦੇ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ, 'ਦੇਹਾਤੀ ਸਮਾਜ' ਦੀ ਰਮਾ ਰਮੇਸ਼ ਪ੍ਰਤੀ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਨੂੰ ਚੇਤਨ ਭਾਤ ਸਵੀਕਾਰ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਦੇ ਪੱਖ ਵਿਚ ਖਲੋਣ ਦੀ ਦਲੀਲ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੀ, ਚਰਿੱਤਰਗੀਟ ਦੀ ਵਿਧਵਾ ਸਾਵਿੱਤਰੀ ਸਤੀਮ ਦੀ ਦਾਸ-ਭਾਵਨਾ ਨਾਲ ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਉਪਰੰਤ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ-ਵਿਵਾਹ ਕਰਨ ਬਾਰੇ ਸੋਚ ਵੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਕਦੀ ਅਤੇ ਕਿਰਣਮਈ ਆਪਣੇ ਪ੍ਰੇਮੀ ਉਪੇਂਦਰ ਨਾਥ ਨੂੰ ਦਿਤਾ ਵਚਨ ਨਿਭਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਉਸਦੇ ਜਵਾਨ ਭਰਾ ਦਿਵਾਕਰ ਦੀ ਦੇਖ-ਰੇਖ ਭਰਵਾ ਵਾਗ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ।

ਵੇਸਵਾਵਾ ਦੇ ਸੰਬੰਧ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਇਹ ਗੱਲ ਸਹੀ ਹੈ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਸਥਿਤੀ ਵਿਧਵਾਵਾਂ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਵੀ ਨੀਵੀਂ ਹੈ ਜਿਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਹ ਕਿਸੇ ਸਾਊ ਪੁਰਸ਼ ਪ੍ਰਤੀ ਆਕਰਸ਼ਣ ਨੂੰ ਸਰਧਾ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਕਲਪ ਸਕਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਮਿਸਾਲ ਵਜੋਂ 'ਦੇਵਦਾਸ' ਦੀ ਚੰਦਰਮੁਖੀ ਦੇਵਦਾਸ ਪ੍ਰਤੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ-ਭਾਵਨਾ ਸਰਧਾ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਸ਼੍ਰੀਕਾਤ ਦੀ ਰਾਜ ਲਖਸਮੀ ਦੀ ਵੀ ਇਹੀ ਅਵਸਥਾ ਹੈ।

ਇਸ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਰ ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਦੇ ਨਾਵਲਾਂ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਧਾਨ ਵਿਸ਼ਾ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਇਹ ਸੇਵਾ ਸਰਧਾ ਅਤੇ ਸਮਰਪਣ ਦੇ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਕਦਰਾ ਇਸਤ੍ਰੀ-ਪੁਰਸ਼ ਸੰਬੰਧ ਦੀ ਅਸਮਾਨਤਾ ਦੀਆਂ ਸੂਚਕ ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਸਾਮੰਤਵਾਦੀ ਸੰਸਕ੍ਰਿਤੀ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੋਏ ਇਸੇ ਦੀ ਪ੍ਰਸਤੀ ਕਰਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਜਦ ਕਿ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਪਰਸਪਰ ਆਕਰਸ਼ਣ ਸਮਾਨਤਾ ਅਤੇ ਆਦਰ ਤੇ ਆਧਾਰਿਤ ਅਜੇਹੀ ਭਾਵਨਾ ਹੈ ਜਿਸ ਦੀ ਤ੍ਰਿਪਤੀ ਪ੍ਰਸਪਰ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਨਾਲ ਹੀ ਹੋ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ ਹੋਰ ਕਿਸੇ ਭਾਵਨਾ ਨਾਲ ਨਹੀਂ।

ਪਰ ਆਪਣੇ ਪਰਿਵਸ ਦੇ ਇਸ ਅੰਗ ਪ੍ਰਤੀ ਲੇਖਕ ਦੀ ਕੀ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟੀ ਹੈ? ਉਹ ਆਪਣੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਦੇ ਸੰਸਕ੍ਰਿਤਕ ਵਿਰੋਧਾਭਾਸਾਂ ਦੀ ਤ੍ਰਾਸਦੀ ਸਿਰਜਦੇ ਹਨ। ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੀ ਸਾਮੰਤਵਾਦੀ ਸਦਾਚਾਰ ਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰੇਰਿਤ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦਾ ਪਾਤਰ ਆਪਣੀ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ-ਭਾਵਨਾ ਦੀ ਤ੍ਰਿਪਤੀ ਕਟਨ ਦੀ ਬਜਾਏ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਣਿਤ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਉਸਦਾ ਉੱਦਾਤੀਕਰਣ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ ਜਿਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦਾ ਆਤਮ-ਬਲੀਦਾਨ ਆਤਮ-ਪੀੜ ਬਣਕੇ ਰਹਿ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਤ੍ਰਾਸਦੇ ਪਾਤਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦਾ ਅੰਤ ਵੀ ਤ੍ਰਾਸਦ ਹੋ ਨਿਬੜਦਾ ਹੈ। 'ਦੇਵਦਾਸ' ਇਸ ਪੀੜਾ ਨੂੰ ਜਰਦਾ ਹੋਇਆ, ਅੰਤ, ਪ੍ਰਾਣ ਤਿਆਗ ਦਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਅਤੇ ਪਾਰਵਤੀ ਤੇ ਚੰਦਰਮੁਖੀ ਲਈ ਜੀਵਨ ਭਰ ਲਈ ਵੇਦਨਾ ਦਾ ਕਾਰਨ ਹੋ ਨਿਬੜਦਾ ਹੈ। ਮਾਧਬੀ ਦਾ ਭੈਣ-ਭਰਾ ਦੇ ਸੰਬੰਧਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਹੋਣ ਵਾਲਾ ਕਰੁਣਾ-ਪ੍ਰੇਰਿਤ ਮਕ-ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਇਸੇ ਭਾਤ ਦੀ ਤ੍ਰਾਸਦ ਸਥਿਤੀ ਸਿਰਜਦਾ ਹੈ। ਰਮਾ, ਰਮੇਸ਼ ਨੂੰ ਤਨੋਂ ਮਨੋਂ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੋਈ ਵੀ ਵਿਧਵਾ ਨਾਰੀ ਲਈ ਸਥਿਰ ਮੁੱਲ-ਵਿਧਾਨ ਤੋਂ ਪ੍ਰੇਰਿਤ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਇਕ ਵਿਰਾਗਣ ਦਾ ਜੀਵਨ ਬਤੀਤ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਕਾਸੀ ਚਲੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ। ਸਾਵਿੱਤਰੀ ਅਤੇ ਕਿਰਣਮਈ ਵੀ ਇਸੇ ਪੀੜਾ ਦਾ ਸਿਕਾਰ ਬਣਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ।

ਕਰੁਣਾ, ਸੇਵਾ ਸਰਧਾ ਅਤੇ ਸਮਰਪਣ ਦੀਆਂ ਭਾਵਨਾਵਾਂ ਸਦਾਚਾਰਕ ਤੌਰ ਤੇ 'ਸੱਜਨਤਾ' ਦੇ ਅੰਤਰਗਤ ਆਉਂਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ ਪਰ ਇਤਿਹਾਸਕਗਤੀ ਤੋਂ ਪਛੜੀਆਂ ਹੋਈਆਂ ਹੋਣ ਕਰਕੇ ਤ੍ਰਾਸਦ-ਸਥਿਤੀਆਂ ਸਿਰਜਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਅਜਿਹੀਆਂ ਤ੍ਰਾਸਦ-ਸਥਿਤੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਆਧਾਰ ਤੇ ਸਾਮੰਤਵਾਦੀ ਕਦਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਨਿਰਾਰਥਕਤਾ ਮੂਰਤੀਮਾਨ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਇਕ-ਨਾਇਕਾਵਾਂ ਸਹੀਦ ਨਹੀਂ, ਦੁਖਾਤਕ ਪਾਤਰ ਹਨ ਜਿਹੜੇ ਇਤਿਹਾਸਕ ਸੰਕਟ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਉਪਜੇ ਮਾਨਸਿਕ ਸੰਕਟ ਦਾ ਕਲੇਸ਼ ਸਿਰਜਦੇ ਅਤੇ ਭੋਗਦੇ ਹਨ। ਉਹ ਜੀਵਨ ਦੇ ਅਜੇਹੇ ਦੌਰਾਨ ਤੇ ਆ ਖਲੋਤੇ ਹਨ। ਮਿੱਥ ਪ੍ਰਾਰਥਨਾ ਅਤੇ ਨਵੀਨ ਆਦਰਸ਼ਾਂ ਵਿਚਕਾਰ ਸੰਘਰਸ਼ ਹੋ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਇਸ ਸੰਘਰਸ਼ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੋਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਤ੍ਰਾਸਦੀ ਦੇ ਮਹਾਨ ਕਲਾਕਾਰ ਹਨ।

ਵਿਰੋਧੀ ਆਦਰਸ਼ਾਂ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੋਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਤ੍ਰਾਸਦੀ ਦਾ ਇਕ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਉਦੋਂ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਆਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਜਦੋਂ ਸਮਰਪਣ-ਪ੍ਰੇਰਿਤ ਅਤੇ ਸਵੈ-ਮਾਣ ਪ੍ਰੇਰਿਤ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਵਿਚਕਾਰ ਤਨਾਉ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਪਾਰਵਤੀ, ਦੇਵਦਾਸ ਦੇ ਉਸ ਨਾਲ ਵਿਆਹ ਤੋਂ ਇਨਕਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਵਿਅਕਤਿਤਵ ਦਾ ਅਪਮਾਨ ਸਮਝਦੀ ਹੈ ਜਿਸ ਤੋਂ ਉਤੇਜਿਤ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਉਹ ਦੇਵਦਾਸ ਦਾ ਬਾਦ ਵਿਚ ਕੀਤਾ ਪ੍ਰਸਤਾਵ ਨੁਕਰਾ ਦਿੰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਕੁਸੁਮ ਦੇ ਪੇਕਿਆ ਉਤੇ ਉਸ ਦੇ

ਪਤੀ ਵਿੰਦਾਵਨ ਦੇ ਮਾਪਿਆ ਨੇ ਝੂਠੀ ਤੁਹਮਤ ਲਾਈ ਹੈ ਜਿਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਹ ਆਪਣੇ ਪਤੀ ਦੇ ਘਰ ਜਾਕੇ ਵੱਸਣ ਲਈ ਤਿਆਰ ਨਹੀਂ। ਸਵੈਮਾਣ ਦੀ ਭਾਵਨਾ ਤੋਂ ਪ੍ਰੇਰਿਤ ਹੋਕੇ ਵਿਜਿਆ ਵਿਲਾਸ ਬਿਹਾਰੀ ਦੀ ਅਧੀਨਗੀ ਸਵੀਕਾਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਦੀ। ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰੇਰਣਾ ਸਾਮੰਤਵਾਦੀ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੀ 'ਹੋਂਦਾਨੀ' ਇਸਤਰੀ ਨੂੰ ਸੁਤੰਤਰ ਹੋਂਦ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਨੂੰ ਪੱਛਮੀ ਸੰਸਕ੍ਰਿਤੀ ਅਧੀਨ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੋ ਰਹੀ ਆਧੁਨਿਕ ਇਸਤਰੀ ਦਾ ਇਹ ਸਰੂਪ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਨ ਹੈ।

ਸੁਤੰਤਰ 'ਸਵੈ-ਹੋਂਦ' ਦੀ ਭਾਵਨਾ ਦਾ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਬਲਵਾਨ ਰੂਪ 'ਸੋਸ ਪ੍ਰਸਨ' ਦੀ ਨਾਇਕਾ 'ਕਮਲ' ਵਿਚ ਮੂਰਤੀਮਾਨ ਹੋਇਆ ਹੈ। ਪਰੰਪਰਾਗਤ ਸਾਸਕ੍ਰਿਤਿਕ ਕਦਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਮਾਨਸਿਕ ਦਬਾਓ ਹੇਠ 'ਚਰਿਤਰਹੀਣ' ਦੀ ਵਿਧਵਾ 'ਸਾਵਿੱਤਰੀ' ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਨੂੰ ਪਤਿਤ ਸਮਝਦੀ ਹੈ ਜਿਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਹ ਆਪਣੀ ਅਤੇ ਸਤੀਸ ਦੀ ਇੱਛਾ ਦੇ ਬਾਵਜੂਦ, ਸਤੀਸ ਨਾਲ ਵਿਆਹ ਕਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਇਨਕਾਰ ਕਰ ਦਿੰਦੀ। ਪਰ 'ਸੋਸ ਪ੍ਰਸਨ' ਦੀ ਕਮਲ ਦੀ ਚੇਤਨਾ ਇਸ ਭਾਤ ਦੇ ਦਬਾਓ ਤੋਂ ਮੁਕਤ ਹੈ। ਉਹ ਵਿਧਵਾ ਹੈ, ਆਪਣੇ ਦੂਸਰੇ ਪਤੀ ਦੀ ਛੱਡੀ ਹੋਈ ਹੈ। 'ਸਾਉ' ਸਮਾਜ ਉਸਨੂੰ ਪਤਿਤ ਸਮਝਦਾ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਇਹ ਗੱਲ ਉਸਦੇ ਮਨ ਵਿਚ ਹੀਣਤਾ ਪੈਦਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਦੀਆਂ ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਉਸਦੇ ਆਦਰਸ਼ ਆਧੁਨਿਕ ਸੰਸਕ੍ਰਿਤੀ ਦੇ ਆਦਰਸ਼ ਹਨ; ਉਹ 'ਵਿਧਵਾ ਹੋ ਜਾਣ' ਜਾਂ 'ਛੱਡੀ ਜਾਣ' ਵਿਚ ਆਪਣਾ ਕੋਈ ਦੋਸ਼ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਮਝਦੀ ਜਿਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਹ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ-ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟੀ ਦੀ ਯਾਚਨਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਦੀ। ਦੋਸ-ਭਾਵਨਾ ਤੋਂ ਮੁਕਤ ਹੋਣ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੀ ਉਹ ਸਮਾਜ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਨਿਡਰਤਾ ਨਾਲ ਵਿਚਰਦੀ ਹੈ ਪਰ ਜਦੋਂ ਹਰਿੰਦਰ ਨਿਪਟ ਨਿਡਰਤਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਸਦੀ ਪ੍ਰਸੰਸਾ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਇਸਦਾ ਵਿਰੋਧ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਆਦਰਸ਼ਾਂ ਲਈ ਉਹ ਨਿਡਰ ਹੈ, ਹਰਿੰਦਰ ਨੂੰ ਉਹ ਆਦਰਸ਼ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਨ ਨਹੀਂ।

ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਆਪਣੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਦੇ ਸ੍ਰੇਸ਼ਠ ਤ੍ਰਾਸਦੀਕਾਰ ਹਨ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਵਲਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਤ੍ਰਾਸਦੀ ਦਾ ਜਨਮ ਪਾਤਰਾਂ ਦੀ 'ਦੁਰਜਨਤਾ' ਜਾਂ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਕੂਲ ਸਥਿਤੀਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਆਦਰਸ਼ਵਾਦੀ ਸੰਘਰਸ਼ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਸਗੋਂ ਵਿਰੋਧੀ ਸਾਸਕ੍ਰਿਤਕ ਮੁੱਲਾਂ ਦੇ ਤਨਾਓ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਇਕ-ਨਾਇਕਾਵਾਂ ਦਾ ਸਾਸਕ੍ਰਿਤਕ ਆਧਾਰ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੀ ਜ਼ਿਮੀਂਦਾਰਾਂ ਸਮਾਜ ਹੈ ਜਿਸ ਵਿਚ ਇਸਤਰੀ-ਪੁਰਸ਼ ਸੰਬੰਧਾਂ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਣਿਤ ਰੂਪ ਵਾਸੀ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਵਾਲਾ ਹੈ। ਪਰ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦਾ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਨਵੀਨ ਪੱਛਮੀ ਸੰਸਕ੍ਰਿਤੀ ਨਾਲ ਵੀ ਜੁੜ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ ਜਿਸ ਵਿਚ ਮਮਾਨਤਾ-ਅਧਾਰਤ ਇਸਤਰੀ-ਪੁਰਸ਼ ਸੰਬੰਧਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਦਾਚਾਰਕ ਸਮਝਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਰ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦਾ ਵਿਅੰਕਤਿਤਵ ਇਕੋ ਸਮੇਂ ਵਿਰੋਧੀ ਮੁੱਲਾਂ ਦੇ ਸੰਕਟ ਵਿਚ ਗ੍ਰਸਤ ਹੈ। ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਪੁਰਾਤਨ ਮੁੱਲ-ਵਿਧਾਨ ਲਈ ਆਪਾ ਬਲੀਦਾਨ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲੀ ਇਸਤਰੀ ਦਾ ਦੁਖਾਤ ਚਿਤਰ ਕੇ ਨਵੀਨ ਮੁੱਲਾਂ ਦੇ ਪੱਖ ਵਿਚ ਆਵਾਜ਼ ਉਠਾਉਂਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਤ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਇਸ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਰ ਉਹ ਆਪਣੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਦੇ ਯਥਾਰਥ ਨੂੰ ਪ੍ਰਗਤੀਸ਼ੀਲ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟੀਕੋਣ ਤੋਂ ਪੇਸ਼ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲੇ ਵਿਲੱਖਣ ਕਲਾਕਾਰ ਹਨ। ਉਹ ਆਪਣੇ ਪਾਤਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਮਾਨਸਿਕ ਸਥਿਤੀ ਦੇ ਚਿਤਰਕਾਰ ਹਨ, ਜਿਸ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟੀ ਤੋਂ ਇਹ ਚਿਤਰ ਪੇਸ਼ ਕੀਤਾ ਗਿਆ। ਉਹ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਰਚਨਾ ਵਿਚ 'ਧੁਨੀ' ਬਣਕੇ ਸਮਾਈ ਹੋਈ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਧੁਨੀ ਦੀ ਪਕੜ ਅਤੇ ਸੋਝੀ ਨਾਲ ਹੀ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟੀ ਦਾ ਭੇਦ ਪਾਇਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟੀ ਲੋਕ-ਰਾਜੀ ਸੰਸਕ੍ਰਿਤੀ ਦੀ ਦੇਣ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਸਰਤ ਚੰਦਰ ਇਸ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟੀ ਦੇ ਅਵਤਾਰ ਕਲਾਕਾਰ ਹਨ।

# Dialectics of Saratchandra's novels

Tarsem Raj Vinod

The great novelist of the Bengali language Saratchandra (1876-1938) and his writings are the product of that epoch of Indian social development when, after the defeat of the Indian feudal struggle against the British imperialism in 1857, the whole of India had come under the direct control of the Crown and the British imperialists had adopted the policy of preserving the feudal institutions and culture for the furtherance of their imperialistic interests. Still, however, despite this reactionary policy of the State, a new Indian middle class had been emerging under the influence of Western culture. Rich and high caste people of the feudal regime were getting new education, adopting new professions and occupations, and settling in big towns and cities where the Western culture was creating an atmosphere of *this worldliness and secularism*.

This very westernization of the newly born middle class was making them conscious of the fact that they could achieve their goals only in a free India and that freedom of India could be attained and maintained only through the modern democratic institutions and culture. Thus, the fundamental contradiction of the epoch lay between the forces of imperialist-feudal alliance and the democratic forces. The dialectics of this contradiction finds expression through the man-woman relationships in the novels of Saratchandra. Saratchandra deals with these relationships of Brahminical feudal society changing under the impact of Western democratic culture. The cultural values of the Indian feudal society accepted as moral and legitimate only that union between man and woman which was achieved through marriage approved and arranged by parents. Let alone the extra-marital relations resulting from mutual attraction between man and woman receiving the social assent, even talking of love marriage was deemed sinful. Man being the sole proprietor of land, the main economic source of society, the approved relationship between man and woman was that of the benevolent Master and the dedicated servant. Born out of this social structure and, in turn, strengthening its sources, these cultural values needed not only social sanctions but their internalization also for their perpetuation. So, the socialization of an individual made these values an integral part of his consciousness and he believed that he could attain self-realization only through realizing these values. Consequently, the young men and women brought up in such a society regarded even the remotest idea of

love or love marriage as illegitimacy, which left very little scope for any kind of reorientation to be perpetrated upon the established value system of society.

But the impact of the Western culture bestowed moral approval upon love resulting in not only a possibility of an external conflict between the old and the new generations but also putting the latter in a tense mental situation, torn between the new and the old attitudes.

The leitmotif of Saratchandra's writings is the conflict between the old and the new cultures manifesting itself in the form of mental tension in his characters. His concept of fiction is not circumscribed by the naivety of the reformists who seek to solve cultural problems by the victory of the hero, or by change of heart of the villains. He does not portray his heroes and heroines as ideal types of the new values, but makes them live through the complex situation created by the mental tension arising out of the clash between the two value patterns, and anatomises and studies their behaviour. For instance, in *Dēbdās* Dēbdās loves Pārbatī, but at the same time nurtures the ideal of filial obedience which prevents him from going against the wishes of his orthodox parents. Saratchandra does not try to project Dēbdās as siding with Pārbatī or with his parents, but brings into relief the dichotomy that has seized his mind and become the source of acute agony for him. Similarly, Bijayā, the heroine of the novel *Dattā*, is motivated by ambivalent attitude towards Bilās Bihārī and Narēndra, the man she loves.

This tension becomes all the more intense in the context of widows. The value patterns of the feudal socio-cultural system forbid the widow to conceive of a man other than her dead husband, even in her dreams. The internalization of this value constrains his widow heroines to express their passion in the socially accepted forms which proves a life long potential source of anguish for them. The spontaneous passion of Mādhavī, the heroine of *Baradidi*, for a dependent but innocent person, Surēndra, finds expression in the form of a 'sister's' compassionate love for the 'brother'; yielding to the folk mores, Ramā's love for Ramēs, in *Pallī-Samāj* externalizes itself in a socially accepted veiled form; Sābitrī of *Charitrahin* does not even conceive of an idea, not the least of love marriage with Satīś, other than serving him with the devotion of a servant. Kiraṇmayī tends to Dibākar, the younger brother of her lover Upēndranāth, in a brotherly manner in order to come up to his ethical values.

This holds good in the case of prostitutes also. Occupying a lower social plane than that of the widows, they can express their love for a 'gentleman' only through devotion and dedication. For example, Chandramukhī's love for Dēbdās and that of Rājlakṣmī for Śīkānta manifested itself in the form of faith and devotion. Thus, the main theme of Saratchandra's novels is individual love finding expression in the form of service, devotion and dedication which are an index of the unequal relationship between man and woman, a product and a concomitant of feudal social system. Love, on the other hand, is a sentiment based upon and nourished by mutual attraction, equality and respect, and can only be gratified through reciprocity.

But how does Saratchandra look at this aspect of his milieu? He lays bare the tragedy of this dichotomy of his times. His characters circumscribed by the Brahminical feudal ethics fail to gratify their love passion. Instead, they channelize it into socially accepted forms which turn their self-sacrifice into self-agony and make them tragic characters meeting their tragic end. Living through this agony Dēbdās, ultimately, gives up the ghost and becomes a cause of life long anguish for Pārbatī and Chandramukhī. Mādhavī's compassionate and mute 'sisterly' love for Surēndra also lead to such a tragic situation. Though intensely in love with Ramēs, Ramā, inspired by the age old value patterns of the society, settles in Kashi as an ascetic. Sābitrī and Kiraṇmayī also fall a prey to this very predicament.

The sentiments of compassion, service, devotion and dedication morally fall within the

ambit of 'Nobleness', but lagging behind the dialectics of history they lead to tragic situations. Saratchandra, through such tragic situations, artistically brings out the futility of these values. His heroes and heroines are not martyrs but tragic characters who create and live through the agony of mental tension born out of the historical crisis. They stand on the cross roads of life where the old and the new are at grips. Saratchandra is the great artist of the tragedy born out of this struggle.

Another form of the tragedy arising out of the paradoxical ideals appears when the 'dedication' and the 'self-respect' of the lover come into clash with each other. Pārbatī takes Dēbdās's refusal as an insult to her person and feeling injured turns down his proposal made later. Kusum is not willing to live with her husband because her in-laws have cast aspersion on the character of her mother. Inspired by her self-esteem Bijayā also refuses to accept the supremacy of Bilās Bihārī. This feeling of self-respect confers an independent entity upon the otherwise 'non-existent' women of the feudal society and Saratchandra approves of this 'modern' woman emerging under the influence of Western culture.

The most powerful form of this feeling of independent self-existence finds expression in Kamal, the heroine of *Śeṣ Praśna*. Steeped into the socio-cultural values of feudalism, the widowed Sābitrī of *Charitrahin* regards herself as 'fallen' and refuses to marry Satīś, inspite of his willingness and proposal. But Kamal is free from such inhibitions. She is a widow, deserted by her second husband. The 'genteel' and 'respectable' Bengali community settled in Agra considers her as a woman of easy virtues. But all this fails to create a sense of 'inferiority' in her, because her ideals are the ideals of modern culture. She does not blame herself for her 'widowhood', or 'desertion' and, for this reason, does not beg for the condescension of others. Free from any alleged sense of guilt, she moves fearlessly in this respectable society. But when Harēndra speaks high of her fearlessness and courage she snubs him because he does not conform to the ideals she stands for.

Saratchandra is the supreme tragedian of his time. In his novels tragedy is born not out of the 'villainy' of his characters or idealistic fight against *unfavourable situations*, but out of the tension between internalized contradictory values. The cultural foundation of his characters is the Brahminical feudal society in which the approved relationship between man and woman is that of a master and a servant. But they are coming into contact also with the modern Western culture which accords moral sanction to the equality-based man-woman relationship. In this way, personality is torn between two contradictory value patterns. Saratchandra, by portraying the tragedy of the self-sacrificing woman conforming to the old value pattern, appears to be raising his voice in favour of the new values creeping into the society of his age.

Saratchandra's forte lies in projecting the ethos of his milieu from a progressive point of view. He portrays human situation reflecting his disapproval of the prevalent feudal values. His vision is woven in the warp and woof of his writings, which can be grasped only through the dissection of its texture.

Admittedly, he is an artist of rare merit expressing his progressive vision through the subtle artistic images of his time.

# شرت چندر چئتر جي: هنجو سنڌي ساهتيه تي اثر

## گو بند مالهي

بنگالي ساهتيه ۾ ۷ ائو يهين صديءَ جي پئين آڌ ۾ هڪ ٻئي پٺيان ٽي اعليٰ ساهتڪار اُڀريا بنڪم، ٽئگور ۽ شرت بنڪم ۽ ٽئگور همعصر رهيا. وري ٽئگور ۽ شرت همعصر ٿي نه، ڪنهن حد تائين رقيب رهيا. در حقيقت ٽئگور ٿي، ويهين صديءَ جي شروعات ۾، شرت کي گمناميءَ مان چڪي ٻاهر آندو ۽ شرت به پڇاڙي ۽ تائين ٽئگور کي گرو مڃيندو رهيو. پوءِ به، هنن جي ويچارن، نظرين ۽ راهن ۾ انٽر رهيو. هنن تنهنجي ساهتڪارن ۾، گهٽ ۾ گهٽ هڪ ساڳياڻي هئي. هو صرف بنگالي ساهتيه تائين سميت نه رهيا. هنن جو اثر لڳي پٺي ڀارت جي هر پاشاڻي ساهتيه تي ٿيو. البته شرت مقبوليت ۾ ٻڏي بزرگ اديبن کي شه ڏيئي ويو. گهٽ ۾ گهٽ سنڌي ساهتيه ۾.

۱۹۳۹ ۾ ٻين ملها پارسي لئرائي ۽ جي چٿر تائين سنڌي ساهتيه ۾ گهڻي ڀاڱي ترجمي جي ڀرمار رهي. ايڪٽر پيڪٽر اصلوڪيون رچنائون شائع ٿيڻيون رهيون. ۱۹۲۱ جي اسهڪار آندلن تائين مغربي ليکڪن - خاص طور شيڪسپيئر، گيتي، چيخوف، ٽالسٽاءِ، ڊيوما، ريٽيلڊس ۽ موپاسان جي شاهڪار رچنائون جا ترجما شائع ٿيندا رهيا. ڪاليداس ۽ ڪن نامڪنين پارتي ساهتڪارن جون ڪي چونڊ رچنائون به، ان وچ ۾، سنڌي ۽ ۱۹۲۱ جي اسهڪار آندلن جي سڃاڻي سنڌي ساهتيه ۾ به گهڻي آئي. منشي پريم چند ۽ سد رشن جون ڪهاڻيون مسلسل سنڌي رسالن ۾ ڇپجڻ لڳيون.

ائين ته سنڌين جي بنگالي ساهتيه سان واقفيت جي شروعات ۱۹۱۸ ۾ ٿي جڏهن بنڪم چندا جونا دل، چندر مڪي، ديوان ڪوٽر يهل جو ترجمو ڪيل ڇپيو. ان بعد ۱۹۲۴ ۾ ٽئگور جي ڪهاڻي ”سدا“ (پروفيسر منگهارام ملڪاڻي ۽ جي ترجمو ڪيل، گونگي ڪنوار جي نالي سان) شائع ٿي. ۱۹۲۷ ۾ ٽئگور جون ڪهاڻيون ڪتابي صورت ۾ (الوادڪ، گرد آري ڪرپالاڻي) به ڇپيون. پر صحيح معنيٰ ۾ سنڌي ۽ بنگالي ساهتيه جو دؤر ۱۹۳۴ کان وٺي شروع ٿيو جڏهن ”رتن ساهتيه مالها“ وجود ۾ آئي. ان جا بانيڪار هيا. چوهرمل هندو جا ۽ پارومل ڪيولراماڻي.

رتن ساهتيه مالها ۽ سندس ساهتيه (ڏه سال اڳ برپا ٿيل، سمپادڪ: ميلارام داسواڻي)، وچ ۾ گوريا چٽا پيٽي شروع ٿي ويئي. سندس ساهتيه هڪ

ٻئي پٺيان پريمر چند جاناول چيپيا ۽ رتن ساهتيه مالها بنڪمر ۽ ٽنگور ۽ شرت جون ر چنائون سنڌي ۽ ۾ آنديون. بنگال جي مقبول تر مور تي پانڪن تي چانئجي ويئي. شرت لوڪ پريه تاه پنهجين پنهجي بزرگن کان گو ۽ کڻي ويو. شرت جي مقبوليت چئن پين ماهوار رسالن کي جنم ڏنو. ڪهاڻي (۱۹۳۹ء، سمپادڪ: جگت آڏواڻي)، پيارت جيون (۱۹۴۰ء، سمپادڪ: چينانند لالواڻي) آشا (۱۹۴۲ء، سمپادڪ: ديو سپاڻي) ۽ نرندگي (۱۹۴۴ء، سمپادڪ: بهاري چا پريه). نتيجو اهو نڪتو جو آزاديءَ ۽ اُن بعد جي لڏپلاڻ کان اڳ ئي شرت جون ذري گهٽ سڀ ر چنائون خاص طور ناول ۽ وڏيون ڪهاڻيون، سنڌي ساهتيه جو سينگار بڻجي چڪيون هيون. بنڪمر ۽ ٽنگور جون چونڊ ر چنائون به، ان وچ ۾ سنڌي جامو اوڍي چڪيون هيون مگر عام پتر هندڙن جو شرت سان پنهنجي وڌيڪ چٽو ۽ گهرو رهيو.

گجراتي ۽ جاتي مشهور ساهتيڪار ڊوڪيٽو، رمن لال ڊيسائي ۽ ڪي. ايم. منشي به سنڌي پانڪن پسند ڪيا پر هنن مان ڪو به بنگالي ساهتيڪارن جي تر مور تي ۽ سان لوڪ پريه تاه برميچي نه سگهيو. شرت جي اشر جوت هوبرڪ ساهتيڪار وار ونگو به نه ڪري سگهيا.

شرت چند ر جو سنڌي ساهتيه تي پتو احسان ر هيو. ۱۹۲۱ جي اسڪالر آندولن بعد سنڌي ۽ ۾ هڪ طرف پيار تي ليکڪن جون شاهڪار ر چنائون چيچڻ لڳيون هيون ۽ ٻئي طرف عياري ۽ جاسوسي قصا شائع ٿيڻ لڳا هئا. لتي پٽي پوتنات، چندر ڪانٽاءِ لوپن ۽ بلڪ جا ڪارناما ساهتيڪ ۽ سماجڪ ر چنائون کان وڌيڪ لوڪ پريه هئا. شرت پتر هندڙن جي دلين تي اهڙو ته چانئجي ويو جو جاسوسي ۽ عياري قصن جو چيچڻ ئي قطعي بند ٿي ويو. شرت جو پيو وٺر اهو ر هيو جو سنڌي ۽ ۾ اصلوڪين ر چنائون لاءِ ميدان گهٽجي ويو. سنڌي ۽ ۾ اصلوڪين ر چنائون جي دؤر شروع ٿيڻ لاءِ، خاص طور ناول ۽ ڪهاڻي ۽ جي ڪيترن ۾، گهڻي ڳهڻي داد جو مستحق شرت چندر چئڻ جي آهي. هڪ طرف هو پانڪن جي دلين تي چانيو ر هيو ۽ ٻئي طرف اصلوڪن ليکڪن کي اتساهت ڪندو ر هيو. شرت جو اهو پتو احسان سنڌي ساهتيه جي اتهااس ۾ سونهري اکرن ۾ لکڻ لائق آهي.

دس جي آزاديءَ سان لاڳو وري هاڻي سنڌي جيون کي تتر بتر ڪري ڇڏيو. سنڌي هندو، جن کي گهڻي حد تائين سنڌي ساهتيه جي هڪ هتي هئي، پيارت ۾ دائوداڻو ٿي پڪڙجي ۽ ڏکين حالتن هيٺ نئين سر پاڻ وٺڻ لاءِ مجبور ٿي ويا. پيارت ۾ سنڌي ساهتيه نرندگيءَ ۽ موت وچ ۾ ڪروڙون بدلڻ لڳو. ڪن بزرگن نوجوان ليکڪن جي همت، لکن ۽ سرجوشيءَ سان سنڌي ساهتيه سنت ٿي آخرين طور نرندگيءَ طرف پاسوبد لايو.

۱۹۴۸ کان ۱۹۵۸ تائين سنڌي ساهتيه ۾ ٻه ڌارا نئون گڏ وڌڻ لڳيون. اصلوڪو ساهتيه ۽ شرت ساهتيه ڪلهوڪلي ۾ ملائي سنڌي ساهتيه جي ترقيءَ جي نئين سر شاهه

گهڙي. اصلوڪي ساهتيه ۽ شرت ساهتيه الڳ الڳ ۽ ملي سنڌ مان آيل ليکڪن جو اتساه برقرار رکيو ۽ نون ليکڪن کي ميدان ۾ آندو. سنڌي ساهتيه جو سرشار چشمو، اڳئين کان اڳرو، وڌيڪ تڪ سان وصيع دائري ۾ وهندو رهيو. آڄ توڙي اهو وهندو رهيو آهي. وڌيل تڪ ۽ آڃابه وصيع دائري ۾. ۽ ان لاءِ شرت جي اشراڪان انگاري ٿي نٿو سگهجي.

شرت بابوءَ جي سنڌي ساهتيه جي اشرا جي ڪڇ ماپ وري به ٻن حقيقتن مان ڪري سگهجي ٿي. ورهاڱي ۽ لڏپلاڻ بعد شرت جا باقي رهيل ناول سنڌي ۽ ڀرپور آيا. بچيل وڏيون ڪهاڻيون ناولن ڪري شائع ڪيون ويون. سنڌ ۾ شائع ٿيل ڪي ناول ۽ وڏيون ڪهاڻيون ٻيهر ٽيهر ڇپيون. ڪي رچنائون ساڳين ترجمانن جون ۽ ڪي نئين سر ترجمو ڪري، نتيجي طور شرت جا ٻاويھ ٽي ناول سنڌي ۾ اچي چڪا آهن. ”ديوداس“ به دفعا ڇپيو. شريڪانت مڪمل ۽ سنڪيپ روپ ۾ آيو. براج بهو ۽ گرھ ڊاٻه به دفعا شائع ٿيا. دتا ۽ بٿراڊيڊي ٽي دفعا ڇپيا. ڇترهيڻ جو آڌ حصو ٻن ڀاڱن ۾ سنڌ ۾ ڇپيو هو. پانڪن باقي آڌ لاءِ ايتري ته ڇڪ ڪئي جو باقي آڌ به ٻين ٻن ڀاڱن ۾ ڀارت جيون ڇپيو. ٻيهر يون آڌ آشا ساهتيه مبدل ڇپيو هو جو ڀارت ۾ وري وجود ۾ نه آيو. شرت ساهتيه جا سنڌي ۾ مکيه ترجمان رهيا آهن: چوهر مل هندو جا، پاسر و مل ڪيولر اماڻي، جگت آڌواڻي، بهاري ڇاٻريه، ناسرائي ڀارتي، ه. پ. وديارتي، ڪرشن هيمراجاڻي، چينانند لالواڻي، هيمراج ۽ لچمڻ ساڻي. هنن مان ڪي ته انهن ترجمن ڪري سنڌي ساهتيه ۾ سٺي جڳهه رکڻ ٿا.

شرت چندر ڇترجيءَ جي جيونيءَ ۽ ساهتيه تي آڄ توڙي وقت به وقت اهڙي ليکڪ سنڌي ۽ ڀرپور شائع ٿيا آهن. ۱۹۵۵ ۾ بهاري ڇاٻريه شرت جنم دن تي يادگار پستڪ ”ڪڍيو جنهن ۾ شرت جيونيءَ سان گڏ وڌ شرت کي شرڌا انجلي ڏيندڙ ڪويتا ۽ ليکڪ پيل هئا. مشهور نوجوان شاعر آجمل جي ڪويتا جي پهرين اسٽئنڊا هين ڏي جي ٿي:

بي سهارن لاءِ بيشڪ هڪ سهار وٺون هئين

گهو سارونده ۾ اميدان جو ستار وٺون هئين

هند جي مظلوم جنتا جو دلا روٽون هئين

پنگتي طوفان ايندڙ جو اشار وٺون هئين

شرت بابوءَ تنهن جي لکڻين عام ڪي بيدار ڪيو

جو ڪري خنجر نه، سو ڪم ڪلڪ تنهن تيار ڪيو

ايشور آنجل، ٻئي وڌيڪ مشهور شاعر به شرت چندر کي نظم ۾ شرڌا انجلي هيٺ ڪئي. اها ان کان اڳ ۱۹۵۲ ۾ ڇپيل ٻئي يادگار پستڪ ۾ شائع ٿي. آنجل جي شعر جي پوئين اسٽئنڊا هئي:

هند جي تون بي تربان جي تربان، توکي سلام

تون غلامن جي هئين آزاد جان، توکي سلام





سان چٽيو. پوءِ به ٻنهي وچ ڏوڏ و فرار ٿي ويا آهي. - خاص طور طرزي بيان ٿي ۽ جو. پر ٻي ڇڏڻ  
 جي رچنائون مان ”پر چار“ بکي پيو. ان جي برعڪس شرت ڪلاڪا ڪاٺڻ ۾ آهي ۽ واري  
 سڌا ٿي اکر به اکر عمل ڪيو آهي. ٻيو ڏوڏ و انٽر اهو آهي ته پر ٻي ڇڏڻ پنهنجي رچنائون ۾  
 ’لڪل‘ نه رهيو آهي. ان جي ابتڙ شرت خالق جهان رچنائون ۾ حاضرن حضور رهندي به ڪٿي  
 به ڏسڻ ۾ نٿو اچي. ها، جيستائين سنڌي ساهتيه ۾ ننڍي ڪهاڻي ۽ جوڙيل آهي تيستائين  
 پر ٻي ڇڏڻ جون ڪهاڻيون شرت جي ڪهاڻين کان سنڌي پائڪن ۾ وڌيڪ مقبول آهن مگر ننڍي رڻ  
 ڪهاڻين جا اسان وٽ پڙهندڙ گهٽ آهن ۽ پار ڪو تهائين ٿورا. شرت جي ننڍي رڻ  
 ڪهاڻين ۾ ”ملهيش“ ٿي نهايت گهڻي لوڪ پر به رهي آهي. ۽ ”ملهيش“ (ترجمان:  
 ه. پ. وديا رٿي) سنڌي ساهتيه ۾ ان ڏوڏ ۾ ڇپي جنهن ڏوڏ ۾ پر ٻي ڇڏڻ ۽  
 سداسن جي ڪهاڻين جو بول بالا هو.

ڀارت جي هڪ ٿي نوبيل انعام کٽندڙ ساهتيڪار رابينڊراناث ٿاگور بنگالي ساهتيه  
 سان ٿي نه، ڀارتي ساهتيه سان وڌيڪو آهي وڌيڪ به وڌيڪ جهڙو. هن ساهتيه جي  
 چئن مکيه شاخن کي نوازيو آهي - ڪويتا، ناول، ڪهاڻي ۽ ناول. هو مڪمل ۽ يگانو  
 ساهتيڪار آهي. صحيح معنيٰ ۾ ’يگ پرش‘ آهي. روي بابو ۽ جون سپ شاهڪار  
 رچنائون سنڌي جامو پهري چڪيون آهن. نوبيل انعام کٽندڙ گيتا نجلي هڪ کان  
 وڌيڪ سنڌي ۽ ۾ آهي. ان جي ترجمي ۾ پروفيسر منگهارا ملڪاڻي ۽ جو نظمي ترجمو  
 پنهنجو مت پاڻ آهي. ”نوڪا ڊوبي“ به به پير اسنڌي ۽ ۾ آيو آهي. بلڪل مختصر  
 روپ ۾ ٻڌل پيٽري (ترجمان: چينمل پر سرام) ۾ مڪمل، طوفاني رنگ (ترجمان: -  
 چوهر مل هندو جا) ”چوڪير والي“ به به پير آيو ۽ ٻئي دفعا چوهر مل هندو جا جي قلم  
 مان (بهرين ننڍو ڪيل) مايا ۽ پوءِ ساهتيه اڪادمي طرفان مڪمل. ”مايا“ جي روپ  
 ۾ ٿاگور جي اها رچنا گهڻي ۾ گهڻي لوڪ پر به ٿي، گرديو جي شاهڪار رچنا گورا (به دفعا  
 سنڌي ۽ ۾ آيل) کان به وڌيڪ. مگر اها به حقيقت آهي ته عام سنڌي پڙهندڙن ۾ شرت  
 جي مکيه ناولن - شريڪانت، چرتراسين، براديددي، دتا، ديوداس ۽ براج بهو- جيترو  
 لوڪ پر به نه ٿيو.

منهن جي نظر ۾ ٿاگور لائبريري ساهتيڪار - ڪلاڪار آهي جو صدين ۾ هڪ  
 پير و جنم وٺندو آهي. مان ائين به وسهندو آهيان ته جي ٿاگور نه ٿئي ها ته شرت  
 به نه ٿئي ها. روايتن مان نجي جي ڪترين مثل ٿيندي آهي جنهن جون ڪتريون هڪ  
 ٻئي سان جڪڙيل هونديون آهن. راجي پيٽر هين جيان ساهتيڪ پيٽر هيون  
 ۾ به نئين پيٽر هي اڳئين ۽ پيٽر هي ۽ جي قرص اس رهندي آهي. شرت تي به ٿاگور  
 ۽ خود بنڪم جا ٿورا آهن. هن خود هڪ کان وڌيڪ پير اعتراف ڪيو، ”مون کي ساهتيڪ  
 تسليمي ۽ لاءِ ڪا جدوجهد ڪرڻي نه پيئي.“ ٿاگور هن جي هلڻ يا چڻجي ڊوڙ ۾

لاءِ شاهراه اڳ ٿي جوڙي هئي. البت شرت ان کي پنهنجو نئون موڙ ڏنو ۽ ڏيس ۾ پائڪن تي جادو جهڙو اثر ڪيو. هو سڙو جي ماڻهن مان اڀريو هو، هنن وچ ۾ سر لهيو هو، هنن جي دڪ ۾ پاڳي پائيوار سر هيو هو، هنن جي ارمانن انهن کي سمجهيو هئا ٿين ۽ هنن جي پاشا اپنائي هئا ٿين. ساهتيه سر ڄڻ ۾ اهي سڀ خصوصيتون شرت لاءِ نهايت ڪارآمد ثابت ٿيون. ۽ هن طرفن بيان به سپاڊيڪ، سڙ ۽ سڙي اختيار ڪئي. دل کان دل تائين هن جي ساهتيه ۾ پائڪن کي ڄاڻ سڃاڻل ماحول، ڄاڻل سڃاڻل ڪردار (آساڌارڻ سڙو ۾ به)، ڄاڻل سڃاڻل واقعا ۽ مسئلا نظر آيا. انهن کان وڌيڪ هنن کي نظر آيو اهو ڪي جو سندن ارد گرد هئو ڪونه پر ٿي سگهيو ٿي. شرت سڃاڻن ۾ اهي سوال ٿي پڇيا جي پڇڻ پائڪن به ٿي ڇاهيا پر پڇڻ جو ساهس نه هون. پهرين دفعو 'ڪريل' انسان نائڪ ۽ نائڪاڻون بڻيا. پهرين دفعو، گهٽ ۾ گهٽ مانسڪ سطح تي، استري پيش کان پري پڻ بڻي پائڪن کي پهرين دفعو، اهو ساهتيه ڪار مليو جنهن کي پنهنجو سمجهي ۽ سڙي سگهي. هر پائڪن کي احساس ٿيو ته شرت سندس، صرف سندس لاءِ سڃاڻل آهي. هو پائڪن جو منظور نظر ليکڪ بڻجي پيو. صرف بنگال ۾ نه، ڀارت جي ڪنڊ ڪڙڇ ۾. الڳ ۽ پاشاڻن، ڌرم ۽ ريتن سمن جي باوجود ڀارت هڪ آهي. جتي ڪٿي گهڻا ٿا ماحول ساڳيو آهي، ڪردار ساڳيا آهن، مسئلا ساڳيا آهن. ۽ سوال به ساڳيا آهن. سنڌي ساهتيه ۾ ڪڏهن ڪڏهن شرت جي ڪردارن تي هڪ ئي الزام لڳايو ويندو آهي ته هنن کي ڪاڻ پيش جي گهٽي ڪانهي ۽ ڪڏهن به آخر تڪ حالتن جو شڪار ٿا ٿين. منهنجي نظر ۾ شرت جي ڪلاڪاري قابليت اتي به ظاهر آهي. هو پاڻ پنهنجي جيون ۾ ڪافي سالن تائين آخر تڪ ڪشمڪش جو شڪار رهيو. انهيءَ ڪري ان ڪشمڪش کان ڪنارو ڪندي هڪ طرف هن پنهنجو پاڻ لڪايو آهي ۽ ٻئي طرف ان جو منحوس پاڇو ظاهر ظهور ڪردارن تي پوڻ نه ڏنو آهي. شرت ساهتيه ڏسڻ سان سڌو پائڪن جون دليون جيتڻ ڇاهيون ۽ ان ۾ هو هر طرح ڪامياب ويو. اهڙي جيت بڻي ڪنهن ڀارت ليکڪ کي آڃا ته نصيب نه ٿي آهي.

# Saratchandra Chatterji :

## His impact on Sindhi literature

Gobind Malhi

In the second half of the nineteenth century, three great writers—Bankimchandra, Tagore and Saratchandra grew in Bengali literature, one after the other. Bankimchandra and Tagore were contemporaries in the traditional sense. Tagore and Saratchandra were not only contemporaries, but to a certain extent were rivals too. In fact, Tagore was instrumental in bringing out Saratchandra from anonymity, and Saratchandra, up to the end of his life, accepted Tagore as his Guru—the Teacher. Even then they were poles apart in their respective thinking, viewpoints and paths of life. There was at least one similarity so far as these three literary giants were concerned ; they could not remain limited to Bengali literature alone. They were translated into almost all the major languages of India and became equally accepted throughout the country. But Saratchandra, no doubt, surpassed the popularity of his two senior stalwarts—at least in Sindhi literature. Before the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, translations had quite an upper hand in Sindhi literature. Original writings, specially in the fields of story and novel, were quite few and far between. Up to Non-Cooperation Movement of 1921, Western writers such as Shakespeare, Goethe, Tolstoy, Chekov, Dumas, Reynolds and Maupassant were quite popular among writers and readers in Sind. Some works of Kalidas were also translated into Sindhi. The consciousness brought by the Non-Cooperation Movement had its echo in Sind, too, and Indian writers like Munshi Premchand and Sudarshan were introduced to Sindhi readers.

Bengali writers had also, by that time, caught the imagination of Sindhi writers and readers. One of Bankimchandra's novels was translated by no less a literary personality than Kauromal Chandanmal in 1918. Earlier or nearly at the same time another stalwart of Sindhi literature, Jethamal Parsram, gave the gist of Tagore's *The Wreck* as *Budāl Bēri*. Prof. Mangharam Malkani translated Tagore's short story *Sudhā* and got it published as *Guñgi Kuāwār* in 1924. In 1927, a collection of short stories by Tagore was also published in Sindhi, translated and compiled by Girdhari Kripalani. But regular and continuous inflow of Bengali literature started from 1934 when Ratan Sahitya Mala, sponsored by Chuhermal Hinduja and Parumal Kewalramani came into existence. Thereafter a sort of competition started between 'Ratan' and 'Sunder

Sahitya' (started in 1924 and edited by Mellaram Vaswani). 'Sunder Sahitya' published novels of Premchand in a row; and 'Ratan' brought out one after another masterpieces of Bankimchandra, Tagore and Saratchandra. The recognised triumvirs of Bengali literature caught the imagination of readers and in turn Saratchandra left his seniors far behind in popularity among readers—specially of the younger generation. This extraordinary popularity of Saratchandra with Sindhi readers eventually gave birth to four more publishing houses—'Kahani' (1939, Ed. Jagat Advani), 'Bharat Jiwan' (1940, Ed. Jethanand Lalwani), 'Asha' (1942, Ed. Dayo Sabhani) and 'Zindgi' (1947, Ed. Beharilal Chhabria). The result was that almost all the standard novels and famous long short-stories of Saratchandra were translated and published in Sindhi before Independence and its off-issue, the partition of the country. No doubt, the selected works of Bankimchandra and Tagore also came into Sindhi by then, but they could not match the popularity of Saratchandra's literature.

Three stalwarts of Gujarati literature—Dhumketu, K. M. Munshi and Ramanlal Desai—also became somewhat popular with the Sindhi readers but not to the extent of Bankimchandra, Tagore or even Premchand. They in no way affected adversely the ever increasing popularity of Saratchandra. He continued to remain the first choice of Sindhi readers.

Beside achieving unprecedented popularity with the readers, Saratchandra had a two fold influence on Sindhi literature. Sind and Sindhis will ever remain grateful to this literary wizard on that account alone. Before Saratchandra's advent in Sindhi literature, detective and mystery books portraying adventures of Bhutnath, Chandrakanta, Loupon and Blake were also as much or even more popular with Sindhi readers as novels of Premchand and other distinguished Indian and foreign authors. Saratchandra's works gave a fatal blow to the popularity of such books. Eventually, publishing houses of mystery and detective novels had to close down altogether. The other influence of Saratchandra was even more significant for the growth of Sindhi literature. He paved the way for the original writings in Sindhi literature. He equally inspired the old and the young aspirants to write original novels and stories portraying the peculiarities of Sindhi life. More than any other writer, Indian or foreign, Saratchandra should have the credit for the continuous flow of original literature in Sindhi. On one hand he ruled over the hearts of his readers and on the other hand he inspired writers, more so the would-be writers, to write on the life and people of Sind. This two-fold influence of Saratchandra will be written in golden words in the history of Sindhi literature.

Independence from foreign rule and its off-issue the partition of the country, upset tremendously Sindhi life and literature. Sindhi Hindus, who had to a great extent the monopoly in the field of literature, had to leave their homes and hearths and were compelled to migrate to India. They got scattered in every nook and corner of this great and wide land and were forced to find new roots in unforeseen circumstances against so many odds. Like life itself, Sindhi literature had to fight for its very survival. Thanks to some distinguished stalwarts and many young writers, Sindhi literature defied death and turned finally to life very soon.

From 1948 to 1958 Sindhi literature moved along two-fold path. Original writings and translations were published simultaneously and regularly. Writers like Tagore, Tarashankar Banerji, Premchand, V. S. Khandekar, and N. S. Phadke were quite popular with the new generation of readers. And Saratchandra, as before, surpassed others in popularity and influence. More and more original writers grew to be recognised writers. And most of them learnt the first lessons of literature from Saratchandra, the master mind, the greatest inspirer and ideal of the Sindhi writers. The result being that a fountain of original Sindhi literature started flowing with more force and in a wider sphere. The flow has continued unabated till today. One can even say that its course has widened with the passage of time. Thanks again to Saratchandra for his initial inspiration and influence.

Saratchandra's popularity in Sindhi literature, after partition, can be gauged from two other facts. After partition and migration of Sindhi Hindus to India, all the remaining novels and long short-stories of Saratchandra got translated and published in Sindhi. Even some novels and long short-stories published in Sindhi before partition were published for the second, even the third, time. Some works were re-translated. All his twenty two novels have been brought into Sindhi—out of them *Dēbdās* twice, *Śrikānta* complete as also abridged, *Dattā* thrice, *Gṛhadāha* twice, *Baṛadidi* thrice, and *Birāj Bau* twice. Half of *Charitrahin* was published in two parts in Sind by 'Asha Sahitya Mandal'. The remaining half remained unpublished due to migration of Sindhis to India. Readers became restive and it had to be published in two more parts by 'Bharat Jiwan'. Saratchandra's works have created, for their translators like Jagat Advani, Parumal Kewalramani, Chuhermal Hinduja, Beharilal Chhabria, Narain Bharati, Hemraj, Krishin Hemrajani and Lachhman Saathi, a good place in Sindhi literature. Some of them are respected as much as, or even more than, many original writers. Up to 1958, Sarat literature was an important section of Sindhi literature. Afterwards, translations of Indian and foreign authors have been quite a few, but Saratchandra continues to be the first choice with readers who borrow books from public, private or commercial libraries.

Sindhi writers, before the independence, were mainly of two categories—Idealists and Progressives, who were termed Marxists. Now, four categories of Sindhi writers are there—Idealistic, Progressive, Romantic, and Existentialist. The writers of the first three schools of thought have never denied the influence of Saratchandra at least in their initial period as writers. Even writers of the fourth school of thought, though they do not recognise any 'ism' or influence, do not disown Saratchandra altogether. Many of them, while they were being initiated in the field of literature, were voracious readers of Saratchandra's masterpieces.

Every now and then articles on Saratchandra's life and literature have been appearing in Sindhi magazines. In September 1955, Beharilal Chhabria, himself a devoted admirer of Saratchandra, brought out a special book in memory of Saratchandra on the occasion of his birthday. Beside a life-sketch of the celebrated author, articles appreciative of his literature were incorporated in the book. And a long poem was written by a young popular poet, Ajhal. The first stanza of Ajhal's poem is produced here to illustrate Sindhi writers' esteem and regard for the Bengali literary giant :

You were, no doubt, helper of the helpless,  
You were, in deep darkness, star of hopes,  
You were, beloved of India's tortured people,  
You were the torch bearer of ming social revolution.  
Oh Sarat, your writings awakened masses ;  
What a sword could not do, was achieved by your pen.

Ishwar Anchal, another more famous young poet, had paid tribute to Saratchandra in a poem published in the first booklet on Saratchandra earlier in 1952. Anchal said in the last stanza of his poem :

Salute to you, O, voice of voiceless in India,  
Salute to you, you were the free self of the slaves,  
Salute to you, with you was safe country's honour,  
Salute to you, bows before you the high sky ;  
Oppression and oppressor, both will perish, but  
You will live for ever in the hearts of Indians.

Beside this poem, articles on the great writer's life and literature were published in that tiny volume. Present writer's brief review of Saratchandra's novels also appeared in that book.

In this Saratchandra's centenary year, one book *Sarat Bābu* on the life and literature of the literary savant by his another devotee-writer Narain Bharati has already come out. Another, *Āwārā Mēssiāh* (written by Vishnu Prabhakar and translated by the best translator in Sindhi of Saratchandra's works, Jagat Advani), is in press. It is expected to be published before Saratchandra's birthday in September.

Again, it will not be out of place to give an opinion on Saratchandra by Prof. M. U. Malkani in his Sahitya Akademi award winning work *Sindhi Nāsurji Tārikh* (History of Sindhi Prose). He writes "Saratchandra, unassuming, but a writer of deep thoughts and psychological insight, has left behind Bankimchandra in popularity."

Saratchandra on one hand appealed to Sindhi readers more than non-Bengali Indian writers and on the other hand was more popular than other Bengali writers, including Tagore and Bankimchandra and Tarashankar. Some of these Indian writers have achieved worldwide popularity. Why did Sindhi readers prefer Saratchandra to such master writers?

Let me analyse Sindhi readers' viewpoints vis-a-vis works of Sarat Premchand and Sarat-Tagore.

At the outset, it can be said that Premchand's masterpieces like *Gōdān* and *Karambhūmi* were translated into Sindhi after 1940 and by that time Saratchandra was already a rage with Sindhi readers; his class novels like *Baradidi*, *Pathēr Dāhī*, *Dattā* and *Gṛhadāha* had come into Sindhi. Even half of *Śrikānta* was in the hands of Sindhi readers. But the secret of Saratchandra's greater popularity lies deeper than the above outward fact.

No doubt, Premchand and Saratchandra were supporters of 'Literature for Life's Sake' theory and both believed in Realism, though Saratchandra never made such a claim openly. On the contrary, he resented being considered and called a writer of mere realism. His realism was more creative than based on stark facts of life. And that perhaps was one plus point in his favour. Otherwise, Saratchandra and Premchand had seen rural society from quite near and portrayed it quite vividly in their respective novels. Their characters were also earthly and real and their problems were also akin. But the difference, and a marked one at that, was in their respective narrations. Premchand's narrative neared the border of propaganda and Saratchandra believed in 'Art Lies in Concealing Art'. He, like God, is present everywhere but seen nowhere in his creations. And that appealed to readers more than anything else. Yes, so far as short stories are concerned, Premchand has some edge over Saratchandra. But in Sindhi, the story has never been as popular with readers as the novel. Saratchandra's short story *Mahēś* has been appreciated a lot by Sindhi readers even though it appeared during the period when Premchand and Sudarshan's stories were in vogue for a decade in Sindhi literature—1924-1934.

The only Nobel Prize winning Indian author, Rabindranath Tagore, has not only enriched Bengali literature but he has also blessed Sindhi literature all these years. Being a unique and gifted writer he has uplifted four branches of literature—Poetry, Story, Drama, and last but not the least, Novel. All his masterpieces have been translated into Sindhi. *Gītāñjali* has been translated twice—once by Prof. M. U. Malkani, Sahitya Akademi award winning author. And that translation is simply marvellous. *The Wreck* has also been published twice. First in a nutshell form, *Budāl Bēri*, by Jethamal Parsram, and second time complete as *Tufāni Raṅg* by Chuhermal Hinduja. *Chōkhēr Bāli* (*Māyā* in Sindhi, translated by Hinduja) has been more popular with Sindhi reader, even more than Tagore's *Gōrā*, but it also did not touch that extraordinary popularity which came to Saratchandra's *Śrikānta*, *Charitrahīn*, *Dattā* and *Baradidi*.

In my humble view Tagore is a complete artist—and a unique one. He is 'Yuga Purush' in its real sense. And I believe, had there not been Tagore, Saratchandra also would not have been there. Tradition is like an unending chain. As the ordinary man is in one way or the other indebted to his grand-father, father, or even elder brother, so is Saratchandra indebted to Bankimchandra and Tagore. Tagore, especially, paved the way for Saratchandra. On that path of recognition Saratchandra had an easy walk. He himself, more than once, admitted that he had not to struggle for his success. At the same time Saratchandra in literature gave a new turn to the path of his distinguished predecessors, and millions of readers throughout the country not only admired him as a wizard of words but also loved him as a man, quite near and dear to them. He sprang up from ordinary people, he lived amongst them, he shared their joys and sorrows, he knew their hopes and fears, and spoke and wrote their language. He portrayed for his readers known atmosphere, known characters (though unusual), known problems. He raised questions which the average reader wanted to ask himself but was too timid to ask. For the first time 'fallen' men and women became heroes and heroines in literature. For the first time woman was more manly than man, hitherto symbol of all that is good and desirable in human society. Again for the first time readers got a writer who not only knew their present but could vividly visualise their future. Since, despite the difference of languages, religions and certain details of ceremonies, India is one and its culture thrives on unity in diversity, and since, above all, throughout the country, village atmosphere is the same,—characters are the same, problems are the same and questions are the same—Saratchandra became the representative writer not only of readers in Bengal but in India as a whole.

In Sindhi literature, some critics have pointed out one defect in Saratchandra's works. Characters do not have any anxiety for food and other worldly goods. The economic side of the characters in Sarat-literature is the safeguarded secret of the characters concerned. I feel, it is the safeguarded secret of the author himself. Since he had to struggle for his very existence in his young age he has kept his characters unmindful of economic life—lest he himself be not pointed out.

Saratchandra believed in and strove for winning the hearts of his readers and he did succeed in no uncertain measure. And 'nothing succeeds like success' is more true in Saratchandra's case than in any other writer's.





## சரத்சந்திரரின் நாவல்களில் சமூகம்

—எஸ். கிருஷ்ணமூர்த்தி

பங்கிம சந்திரா, ரவீந்திரர், சரத்சந்திரர் ஆகிய மூவரும் சர்க்கால வங்காளி இலக்கியத்தின் திருமுத்திகள் ஆவர். இவர்களில் பங்கிமவருக்குக் கிடைக்காத ஒரு வாய்ப்பு சரத்சந்திரருக்கு கிடைக்கத் து. கௌரவமான அசாங்கப் பரிசு வகித்த பங்கிம சந்திரரும், மேட்டுக்குடியில் பிறந்த ரவீந்திரரும், தாங்கள் பிறந்து வளர்ந்த சூழ்நிலை காரணமாகப் பொது மக்களுடன் நெருங்கிப் பழக முடியவில்லை. அவர்கள் ஓரளவு ஒதுங்கியிருந்தே சமூகத்தைக் கவனிக்க நேரிடும். ஆனால் கீழ்நடு வகுப்பைச் சேர்ந்த சரத்சந்திரர் சன் வாழ்க்கையின் பெரும புகழியை வறுமையும் சூனியமும் நிறைந்த சூழ்நிலையில் கழித்தார். மாககணக்கில் நிலையான வேலையோ வருமானமோ இல்லாமலும், சிலசமயங்களில் நாடோடியாகவும் வாழ்ந்தார். இத்தகைய வாழ்க்கையில் அவருக்குப் பலதரப்பட்ட மக்களுடன் — குறிப்பாக, சமூகத்தில் சாமிநாயகம், ஒடுக்கப்பட்ட மக்களுடன் சேர்ந்து வாழவும் உருவகிப் பழகவும் அரிய வாய்ப்பு ஏற்பட்டது. அவருக்கு இப்பரிசுதில் எழுந்தாளர் என்ற முறையில் அவர் கொடுத்து வைக்கப்பட்டான். அந்த அனுபவங்காரணமாகச் சான் அவர்கள் எழை மக்களின் துன்பங்களைக் கனப்படையுடையவர்களில் யதார்த்தமாகவும் உணர்ச்சி பர்வமாகவும் சித்தரிக்க முடிந்தது. கீழ் மட்டத்து மக்கள் அவருடைய நாவல்களில் ஜீவன குதும்பம் பாத்திரங்களாக வளைய வந்தார்கள்.

சரத்சந்திரருக்குக் கிடைத்த இந்த அரிய வாய்ப்பைப்பற்றி ரவீந்திரரே அவரிடம் ஒரு சமயம் சொன்னார், “சரத், நீ அதிருஷ்ட ராவி! உனக்கு எவ்வளவோ பார்க்கவும் அனுபவிகவும் வாய்ப்புக் கிடைத்தது. என் தூதிருஷ்டம், மேட்டுக்குடியில் பிறந்ததால் அந்த அரிய வாய்ப்பு எனக்குக் கிடைக்கவில்லை!”

உலகமொழிகளில் மிக அதிக அளவில் மொழி பெயர்க்கப்பட்ட இந்திய எழுத்தாளர் என்ற பெருமை சரத் சந்திரனுக்கே உரியது. புத்தக தேவ வச கூறியது போல் மக்களின் உள்ளத் தைச் சரத் சந்திரரைப் போல் யாரும் கவர்ந்ததில்லை.

எழுத்தாளர் சரத் சந்திரரின் வெற்றிக்குக் காரணங்கள் மூன்று. ஒன்று, அவரது எளிய நடை. அவர் அதிகக் கல்வியறிவு இல்லாத சாமானிய மக்களும் படித்து அனுபவிக்கத்தக்க முறையில் எளிதான சொற்களைக் கையாண்டார். தான் முறையான உயர்கல்வி பெறாததால் எளிய கடினமான நடை யில் எழுதக் தெரியாது என்று அவர் அடக்கத்துடன் கூறிக் கொண்டார். இரண்டாவது, அவர் சாதாரண மக்களைத் தன் நாவல்களின் கதாபாத்திரங்களாக உலவ விட்டார். அவர்களுடைய இன்பதுன்பங்களை, ஆசாபாசங்களை, குறை நிறைகளைக் கலைத்திறனும் உணர்ச்சி ததும்பவும் சித்தரித்தார். மூன்றாவது—மிக முக்கியமான காரணம்—அவரது நாவல்களில் சாண்ப்பதும் மனிதாபிமானம். முறை தவறிய பாத்திரங்களும், கொடுமை வாய்ந்த பாத்திரங் களுங்கூட அவருடைய படைப்புக்களில் அனுதாபத்துடன் சித்தரிக்கப்படுகிறார்கள். இதன் காரணமாக அவர் குற்றங்களையும் பாவங்களையும் கவர்ச்சிகரமாகச் சித்தரித்து அதன் மூலம் சமூகத்தைக் கெடுப்பதாக அவர் மேல் பலர் குற்றஞ்சாட்டித் தாக்கினார்கள்.

சரத் சந்திரர் ஓரிடத்தில் கூறுகிறார். “என் ஒழுங்கற்ற வாழ்க்கையால் எனக்கு நஷ்டமும் கஷ்டமும் ஏற்படாமலில்லை. ஆனால் நான் சந்தித்த மக்கள் என் நஷ்டங்களை ஈடு செய்து விட்டார்கள். குறைகளும், குற்றங்களும், பாவங்களும் மட்டுமே மனிதர்களல்ல என்ற உண்மையை அவர்கள் எனக்குக் கற்பித்து விட்டார்கள்; அவற்றுக்குள்ளே ஒளிந்திருக்கும் உண்மையான மனிதனை அவர்கள் எனக்குக் காட்டி விட்டார்கள். நான் படைக்கும் இலக்கியம் அந்த உண்மை மனிதனை அவமதிக்காதிருக்கட்டும்!”

வங்க எழுத்தாளர் ஜராசந்தன் கல்லூரி மாணவராக இருந்தபோது ஒருதடவை சரத் சந்திரரைச் சந்தித்தார். சரத் சந்திரரின் பெண் பாத்திரங்களைப் பற்றிப் பேச்சு வந்த போது சரத் சந்திரர் சொன்னாராம், “யாராவது ஒரு பெண்ணை ‘வேசி’ என்றோ ‘நடத்தைகெட்டவள்’ என்றோ சொன்னால் எனக்கு உன்னுள் ஒரு வேசனை உண்டாகிறது!”

கடந்த நூற்றாண்டின் பிற்பகுதியிலும் இந்த நூற்றாண்டின் தொடக்கத்திலும் இருந்த சமூக நிலையைச் சரத் சந்திரர் தன் நாவல்களில் சித்தரிக்கிறார். நிலப் பிரபுத்துவ அடிப்படையில் அமைந்திருந்த சமூகம் அது. ஜமீந்தார்கள் முடிகூடா மன்னர்களாகத் திகழ்ந்தார்கள். அவர்கள் வைத்தது சட்டமாக இருந்தது. பணம் படைந்தவர்கள் கடும் வட்டிக்கு ஏழைமக்களுக்குக் கடன் கொடுத்துக் கடைசியில் அவர்களுடைய கொஞ்ச நஞ்ச நிலங்களையும் கபளீகரம் செய்து கொண் டார்கள். பொதுமக்கள் கல்வியறிவு அற்றவர்களாக, அறியாமையில் முழுகியவர்களாக இருந்ததால் தங்கள் உண்மை நிலைப்புரிந்துக் கொள்ள முடியாதவர்களாக இருந்தார்கள். அவர்கள்

விஷமிகளாலும் பணம் படைத்தவர்களாலும். தூண்டப்பட்டுப் போலிக் கௌரவத்திற்காகப் பரஸ்பரச் சண்டைகளிலும் வீண் வழக்குகளிலும் தங்கள் நேரத்தையும் சொத்தையும் விரயம் செய்து நாசமானார்கள். அவர்கள் பின்பற்றி வந்த மதம் தன் உயிர்க் கத்துவத்தை இழந்து அதில் வெறும் மூட நம்பிக்கைகளும், காலத்துக்கொவ்வாத சடங்குகளுமே எஞ்சி நின்றன. கல்யாணச செலவு ஏழை மக்களின் சக்திக்கு அப்பாற்பட்டதாக இருந்தது. பதின்மூன்று வயதிற்குள் மணம் செய்து வைக்கப்படாத பெண் “அரசாணியா” என்ற பெயரில் தாய்மையற்றவளாக ஒதுக்கி வைக்கப்பட்டாள். அப்படிப்பட்ட பெண்களையுடைய குடும்பமே சமூகத்தால் ஜாதிப்பிடிபட்டதாய் செய்யப்பட்டது. கடுமையான சமூகக்கட்டுப்பாடுகள் எழுகளைத் துன்புறுத்தின. ஆனால் பணம் படைத்தவர்களும் செல்வாக்கு உள்ளவர்களும் இக்கட்டுப்பாடுகளால் பாதிக்கப்படவில்லை. பணபலமும் சாதிபலமும் உள்ளவர்களே அவர்கள் எவ்வளவு ஒழுக்கங்கொள்வார்களாக இருந்தாலும் சரி-சமூகத்தின் தலைவர்களாக இருந்துகொண்டு மற்றவர்களை ஆட்காப்பவைச்சார்கள்.

‘பள்ளிசமாஜ்’ நாவலில் கொடியவனும் ஒழுக்கங்கொடா வனுமான வேணிகோஷாலகன் பணபலத்தால் சமூகத்தை ஆட்டி வைக்கிறான். பணவசதியில்லாத கோவிந்த் கங்குலியும் காமதாசும் வேணி கோஷாலகன் சேர்ந்துகொண்டு மற்றவர்களைத் துன்புறுத்துகிறார்கள். அவர்களுடைய உண்மைக்குணங்களை அறிந்திருந்தும் மற்றவர்களால் அவர்களை ஒன்றும் செய்ய முடியவில்லை.

‘சந்திரநாக்’ நாவலில் சந்திரநாத்தின் சிறியதற்கை மணிசங்கர் அவனிடம் சொல்கிறார், “சமூகமா? நானும் நீயுந்தான் சமூகம்! யாரிடம் பணம் இருக்கிறதோ அவன்தான் சமூகத்தலைவன்!”

சமூகம் பற்றிய சரத்சந்திரரின் கருத்துக்கள் அவருடைய பாத்திரங்களின் மூலமாகப் பொருத்தமான சந்தர்ப்பங்களில் வெளிப்படுகின்றன. உதாரணமாகப் ‘பள்ளி சமாஜ்’ நாவலில் விஸ்வேசுவரி சரத்சந்திரரின் கருத்துக்களை எதிரொலிப்பதாகக் கருதலாம்.

கதாநாயகன் ரமேஷ் தன் கிராமத்தின் அவல நிலை கண்டு வருந்தி அதன் முன்னேற்றத்திற்காகப் பாடுபடுகிறான். இம்முயற்சியில் அவனை எதிர் கொள்பவை அறியாமையாலும் சுயநலத்தாலும் விளையும் எதிர்ப்பும் பழியுந்தான். அவனுடைய அமைதி விரும்பும் கன்மையைப் பயங்கொள்ளித்தனமாகவும், ஈகைக்குணத்தை முட்டாள்தனமாகவும் கவருகப் புரிந்துகொள்கிறார்கள் மற்றவர்கள். அவர்கள் ரமேஷை ஏமாற்றவும் தயங்கவில்லை. அவர்களுடைய இந்நன்றிகெட்ட நடத்தையால் கோபமும் சோர்வும் கொண்ட ரமேஷ் பலதடவைகள் தன் முயற்சியைக் கைவிட்டு விட்டு ஊரைவிட்டே போய்விட்ட தீர்மானிக்கிறான். ஆனால் ஒவ்வொரு தடவையுட விஸ்வேசுவரி அவனுக்கு அறிவுரை கூறி அவனுடைய கடமையை வலியுறுத்தி அவனைத் தடுத்து

நிறுத்துகிறாள் குங்கள் உண்மையான நண்பன் யாரா, உண்மையான நண்பன் எது என்று சாமானிய அறிவுக் கல்வியை அறிவாமையிலும் வறுமையிலும், துன்பத்திலும் உடலிலும் சிரம மக்கள் அனுபவத்துக்கு உரியவர்கள், அவர்கள்மேல் அவன் கோபமாகொளவது சரியல்ல என்பதை அவனுக்கு உரியவர்களுக்கு உண்மையிலேயே புன்னேரம் செயல்படுவது மானல் அவன் கல்லுடன் உடல் உபயோகப்படுபவரும் அறிவுச்சிறமடையும் மற்றது அவர்களுடன் உணர்ச்சி உடையது ஒன்றிப்போய அவர்களுடைய நம்பிக்கைக்குப் பாக்கிமாக வேண்டி மெல்ல உடல் யோசனை சொல்லுகிறாள்

சுருக்கமாகச் சொன்னால் போதாதுகையிலும் இம்மாநிலம் நகரங்களுக்கும் பாக்கிமாக நமது உடல் உபயோகப்படுபவரும் அறிவுச்சிறமடையும் மற்றது அவர்களுடன் உணர்ச்சி உடையது ஒன்றிப்போய அவர்களுடைய நம்பிக்கைக்குப் பாக்கிமாக வேண்டி மெல்ல உடல் யோசனை சொல்லுகிறாள்

விஸ்தாரமாகச் சொன்னால் போதாதுகையிலும் இம்மாநிலம் நகரங்களுக்கும் பாக்கிமாக நமது உடல் உபயோகப்படுபவரும் அறிவுச்சிறமடையும் மற்றது அவர்களுடன் உணர்ச்சி உடையது ஒன்றிப்போய அவர்களுடைய நம்பிக்கைக்குப் பாக்கிமாக வேண்டி மெல்ல உடல் யோசனை சொல்லுகிறாள்

ரமேஷின் உயரகட்சியால் ஏற்பட்ட இன்னொரு கையமான விவிலி ரமாவின் மனமாற்றம் ஆரம்பமாகவே ரமாவிற்கு ரமேஷிடம் மதிப்பு இருந்தாலும் அவளுக்கு உன் சொத்துக்களில் மேலிருந்து ஆசை கையாளில்லை முறையற்ற வழிகளைக் கையாண்டு உன் சொத்தைப் பெருக்கிக் கொள்ளவும் அவள் உயரகட்சியில்லை ஆனால் ரமேஷின் கியாசம் அதன் விளைவாக மக்களிடையே ஏற்பட்ட மாற்றம் அவளது கண்களைத் திறந்து விடுகின்றன அவளுக்குள்ளே உறங்கிக் கொண்டிருந்த மனிதாபிமானம் விழித்துக் கொள்கிறது அவள் தன் தம்பியை ரமேஷிடம் ஒப்படைத்துவிட்டு அவனைக் கேட்டுக்கொள்கிறாள், “இவனை உன் மாதிரியாக ஆக்கி விடு” என்று

ரமேஷின் தியாகம் வேணியின் விஷயத்தில் மட்டுமல்ல பலனளிகளில்லை. ரமேஷின் சிறை வாசத்திற்குப்பின் வேணி அவன் பக்கம் சேர்ந்து கொண்டது உண்மையான. ஆனால் அசுற்றாகக் காரணம் வேணியின் உண்மையான மனமாற்றமல்ல; அவனது கோழைத்தனமும் சுயநலமுந்தான். கிராமமக்களின் ஆதரவால் ரமேஷின் பலம் பெருகிவிடத் துணைபுரிந்தான் பத்திரிகைக்காக அவனுடன் சேர்ந்து கொள்கிறான். வேணியின் பேராசையோ சூட்சுமக் கருணமோ சற்றும் குறைந்து விடவில்லை. அவன் ரமாவின் சொந்த அபகரிக்க ரமேஷின் ஆசையை நாட்கிறான்; ரமாவின் நடத்தைக்கு அபாய உடமாகக் களங்கம் கற்பித்து அவளை தாழ்த்துவதில் செய்கிறான். மனிதர்களில் நிரூபணத்தையே ஒரேயே சைத்தான்களும் உலகம் எழுப்பிய வேணியின் உதாரணத்தினிருந்து தெரிகிறது.

மக்கள் கடைப்பிடித்து வருவது மரபு மனிதாபிமானம் அநீதரத்து வெள்ளம் வலிப்போய் உயிரிலலாகச் சங்கடமாகவுமே ஆரம்பித்திருக்கிறது. பட்டாக்கொடும் ஆகிவிட்டதையும், இப்போதைய கட்டுப்பாடுகளும் நம்பிக்கைகளும் மனிதனின் ஆயுத்கையான மனிதப்பண்பை அழித்துவிடும் தையும் சரத்தந்திரம் தன் நாவல்களில் உருவகமாகச் சித்தரித்துக்கொண்டிருக்கிறது.

மக அனுஷ்டானங்களில் சட்டப்பாடு நம்பிக்கை வைத்து அவற்றை ஒழுங்காகக் கடைப்பிடித்துவரும் ரமாவின் சொந்தக்கலைப் பொருளாகக் கொள்வதற்காக உறைகோளன் வாழ்க்கைகளைக் கொள்ளத் தயாராகவில்லை. ஒரு சில நூறு ரூபாய்களை சூட்சும விருமபாச அவளால் பெறும் பங்களின் வாழ்வு பாழாவதையெதிர்த்துக் கவலைப்படவில்லை. அகநிலைப்பங்களின் நிலைகளை வெள்ளத்தினிருந்து காப்பாற்ற ரமேஷின் உலகம் போது அவள் அவளைத் தடுக்கக் கன ஆட்களை அனுப்புகிறாள்.

சந்திரநாத் நல்லவன்சான். இருந்தாலும் சமூகக் கட்டுப்பாடுகளில் அவனாகிருந்த நம்பிக்கை அவனைக் கோழையாகுவதோடு மனிதகமற்றவராகவும் செய்து விடுகிறது. அவன் ஊர்ப்பழிகளுப் பயந்து சரயுவை விஷமருந்தச் சொல்கிறான். அவனைக் காக்கக் கூடிய பிறகு பல வருடங்கள்வரை அவனைப்பற்றி எந்தச் செய்தியும் விசாரித்து அறிந்து கொள்ள அவன் முயற்சிக்கவில்லை. கர்ப்பிணியாக வீட்டை விட்டு வெளியேறிய சரயுவின் நிலையைப்பற்றி தெரிந்து கொள்ளவோ அவளுக்குப் போதிப்பணம் ஒழுங்காக அனுப்பப்பட்டு வருகிறதென்று விசாரிக்கவோ கூடத் தோன்றவில்லை அவனுக்கு.

சரயு கைலாச பாபுவிடம் இருக்கிறாள் என்று ஹரிகயாள் அவனுக்குத் தெரிவித்தபோது அவன் கேட்கும் முதல் கேள்வி “கைலாச பாபுவின் வயது என்ன?” என்பதுதான். அவனாக சரயுவின் ஒழுக்கத்தில் அவநம்பிக்கை இல்லை. ஆனால் ஒரு இளைஞனின் வீட்டில் அவள் வசித்தால் சமூகம் என்ன நினைத்துக் கொள்ளுமோ என்ற பயந்தான் அவனுக்கு!

புனைமரிகளும் மகநம்பிக்கையிலும் ஊறியவா ஹரிகயாள காசிகுரு வரும் யாதிரீகா  
 சஞ்சகதசாசகனபெயர்ந்து அரவருவாயில் ஜீனமநுசக்துமபுரோகிராஅவொ அவா  
 நல்லாராநா (அ) சிவமனம உயையவா நான ஒருசுழநசையை வைசகுககொண்டு ஆகர  
 விரிநி ருபிது உகாபுடிருந்தசபுவினராயினமேல (அ)சசாய (அ) அவொ அவனுகருபபுக  
 (அ) அவொ ரா ஆகல அவனோபமரிபபுழு விவாரமபிரிநபேபாது அவருநைய மகநம்பிக  
 (அ) உ அபிபிராயசகி ம அவருநகிருநச பயபும கூடவே என பிடைபைபபறறிய  
 உருபு நகுகாசு அவரைககலடுநசாசபாபி சமநவராக மாநரிபிட என சநதிர  
 ராசகல பபட அவனையாக உருண்டபசாஸை நகாபபிணி சபுலுகரு ஸ்ரீரவு  
 உருபு உருபு (அ) மளிகக மறுத்து விரிநா அபா அவனோபகாசு ஸாபிலவசகூட  
 உருபு சாசிலவ

கன சிவில சபுபுக மசுர உகநில நபிபுகையோ நபாபொ ஜிலலா கைலாச  
 பபுவி நகாபபுகவிடகினை சகவனபது உருசமடுவலான விஷயமலல பாவார, புண்ணி  
 யப, சபாசகக சசும பாபி ஜிவநரிப நபபிகுகை (அ)லலாச காணசசாலான அவரால ஒரு  
 (அ) ஸாஸநிய ஸ்ரீயின பெயர், கதாசல உடபுல (அ) மரிகக பபுநத்து மசநம்பிககையறந  
 மருகடுமணி ராபிமாணம (அ)ருகசும எலநநிலை மசமநமநாபுல வலவாவு பபுநச நிலையை  
 அனை நகூபட சகவனபபெயர் சாபசிறச

சமுகக உருபபாசகளுந நயபிபுகைகளுந மணிபாபிமாணனை வறநச செபது ஜியறகை  
 யாக மணிபிப உளவ நரபணபுகபோப போசகி விடுவனை ராசநகிரா என “ஆகஷணியா”  
 நாவலில் உருபகய சகூரபச சிரசரிசகிரா பபுபுல வுகடுஷ ஷுட உரானமாக பிகழும்  
 சூகாசும பெரு ஸாஸசாவை என உயிரகரும மேலாக நேசிபகிருள உருப நியநிலையிலும்  
 வலவாரோபகக ரகபோபபொபுசகுகெனா ஞானசாவை வலாககிருள ஞானசாவை ஒரு  
 போசகிபிபிபுபுலுக நமணட சிவயிகக உருசகோசன செபும பபுமசிபை சாரியாக எபிக  
 கிருள அகூல ஞானசாவை மணநகூசு சொளவ மறுசசம போது அவள உருப (அ) மகையான  
 நானா செபும விமானசரேபுர மநநவ அவனுடன பபிரகமமாகப பலா உருபினியில சண்  
 ன உருப போபிருள ஞானசாவின் கிருமண வாயப புகளபிபபோகப போக சூகா வினமனமும  
 மாநிலி கிருது என அருமை மகனோயே கருமையாகுதி ம உருபகசு ஒரு ராபின ஜியற  
 கைசு மாருகப பெண்ணின் சாவை விருமபும அளவுகரு—அவளது உருபில கபபுக நலநது  
 விடுகிறது மண்டாகாசகாரணரால் ஞானசா சாசிபிரஷ்டம ரெயாயப வளவ அபபடி நோந  
 தால அவள கன காயகரு மசசா ருருளகூட ச செய்ய ஜியலாது எனறு அறிம போது தூகா  
 அடியோடு மாநிலிபுகிருள அவள ஞானகாவை ஒரு சிபுவனுக்கு மணம் செயலிசது அவளு  
 டைய சாதியைக சாபபாறறுமபடி கன மைசதுனை வேண்டிக கொள்கிருள





டைய கோழைத்தனத்தைக் காட்டுகிறது. அவனுடைய தந்தை திடீரென்று இறந்து போயிராவிட்டால் அவன் நிச்சயமாக வேறொரு பெண்ணை மணந்து கொண்டிருப்பான்; லலிதாவின் வாழ்க்கை இருண்டு போயிருக்கும். இக்கைய சோக முடிவைத் தவிர்ப்பதற்காகவே சரத்சந்திரர் சேகரின் தந்தையைச் சாகச் செய்துவிட்டார் என்று தோன்றுகிறது. சேகரிடம் நமக்கு மதிப்போ, அனுதாபமோ ஏற்படுவதில்லை. அவன் லலிதாபோன்ற ஒரு சிறந்த பெண்மணியை மனைவியாக அடைவதில் நமக்குத் திருப்தி ஏற்பட வில்லை.

இது மாதிரிதான் ‘அரக்ஷணியா’ வின் முடிவும் நமக்கு அதிருப்தியை விளைவிக்கிறது. நாவலின் ஆரம்பத்தில் அதுலுக்கு ஞானதாவிடம் உள்ள காதல் சித்தரிக்கப்படுகிறது. அழகியில் லலிதா அலும் ஞானதா அவனது உள்ளத்தைக் கவர்ந்திருக்கிறார். அவனது காதல் ஓரளவு நன்றியுணர்வில் பிறந்தது. அவன் ஒரு கடும் நோயால் பீடிக்கப்பட்டுச் சாக இருந்தபோது அவனுக்கு இரவும் பகலும் பணிவிடை செய்து அவனை மரணத்தின் பிடியிலிருந்து மீட்டவன் ஞானதா. ஆனால் அவனுடைய காதலுக்கு இருவகைச் சோதனைகள் ஏற்படுகின்றன. ஒன்று, அவனுடைய உறவினரின் எதிர்ப்பு. இரண்டாவது, ஞானதா நோய்வாய்ப்பட்டிருக்கிறதன் கொஞ்ச நஞ்ச அழகையும் இழந்து விடுவது. அதுவின் காதல் இவ்விரு சோதனைகளையும் சந்திக்கும் அளவுக்கு உறுதியானதாக இல்லை. அவன் ஞானதாவை மணக்க மறுக்கிறான். அவனைப் பிறர் முன்னர் உதாசீனம் செய்யவும் தயங்கவில்லை. ஆனால் நாவலின் முடிவில் ஞானதாவின் பரிதாபமான நிலை கண்டு அவனது மனம் மாறுவதாகச் சித்தரிக்கிறார் ஆசிரியர். துர்காவின் சடலம் மயானத்தில் எரிந்து கொண்டிருக்கும்போது அதைப் பார்ந்துக் கொண்டிருக்கும் அதுவின் மனமாற்றம் முழுமை பெறுவதாகவும் அவன் ஞானதாவை எற்றுக் கொள்வதாகவும் நாவலை முடிக்கிறார் சரத்சந்திரர். ‘மயான வைராக்கியம்’ என்பது ஒரு நிலையற்ற—ஆகவே நம்ப இயலாத—தீர்மானத்தைக் குறிக்கும் சொற்றொடர். அதுவின் இந்த ‘மயான வைராக்கியம்’ ஸ்திரத்தன்மை வாய்ந்ததுகாண, உண்மையானதுதான், அதை நம்பி ஞானதா அவனை மணந்து கொள்ளலாமா என்றெல்லாம் கேள்வி நம் மனதில் எழுகிறது. இவ்வாறு சரத்சந்திரர் நாவலை முடித்திருப்பது நமக்குத் திருப்தியளிக்கவில்லைதான். இம்முடிவு வலிந்து நினைப்பாட்ட முடிவாகத் தோன்றுகிறது நமக்கு. ஆனால் வேறு எப்படித்தான் ஆசிரியர் ஞானதாவின் பிரசுரையைத் தீர்த்திருக்க முடியும்?

‘சந்திரநாத்’, ‘தேவதாஸ்’, ‘பரிணீதா’ ‘அரக்ஷணியா’ நாவல்களின் கதாநாயகர்களுடைய குணச்சித்திரம் பாராட்டக்கூடியதாக இல்லை. ஆனால் அவற்றின் கதாநாயகிகள் தன்னம்பிக்கையும், உறுதியும், நேர்மையும் வாய்ந்த பாத்திரங்களாகத் தீட்டப்பட்டிருக்கிறார்கள். அவர்களுடைய காதலர்கள் மனிதத்தன்மையும் உறுதியும் அற்றவர்களாகவும் அவர்களுக்குச் சற்றும் பொருத்தமில்லாதவர்களாகவும் தோன்றுகிறார்கள். பொதுவாகவே சரத்சந்திரர் தன் பெண் பாத்திரங்களைச் சிறந்தவர்களாகப் படைத்திருக்கிறார் என்று சொல்லலாம். ஆண் இனத்தைவிடப் பெண் இனத்திடம் அவருக்கு அதிக நம்பிக்கை இருந்ததோ?

# Society in Saratchandra's novels

S. Krishnamoorthy

Bankimchandra, Rabindranath and Saratchandra may be called the Trinity of modern Bengali literature. Of these Saratchandra was more fortunate than the others in one respect. Bankimchandra who held a responsible Government post and Rabindranath who was born in an aristocratic Zemindar family were, by the very nature of their background, precluded from intimate contact with the common masses. They observed the people from a distance. On the other hand, Saratchandra, born in a lower middle class family, living a major part of his life in penury and pain, for months together without a steady job or a regular income and sometimes wandering from place to place like a vagrant, had the opportunity of coming into close contact with all sorts of people that make up society. He lived for years among the poor people, people who are considered the dregs of society, shared in their joys and sorrows as one among them and thus gained a valuable experience of life and the people. It was this firsthand experience that enabled him to portray the lives of the common people in an authentic manner and with genuine feeling. People of the lower strata of society come alive in Saratchandra's writings.

Referring to this, Rabindranath once said to Saratchandra, "Sarat, you are a lucky man. You had the rare opportunity to see and experience many things, an opportunity denied to me by my birth in an aristocratic family".

Saratchandra enjoys the distinction of being the most translated Indian author. Buddhadeb Bose says that no other writer, not even Rabindranath, has charmed the hearts of so many people as Saratchandra.

This phenomenal success of Saratchandra is due to three reasons. One is his simplicity of style. He uses the simplest words in common use which can be easily understood by even those who are just literate and have not had the benefit of higher education. He used to say modestly that not having had much formal education he had only a limited vocabulary and could not use difficult words. Secondly, he portrayed in his novels common people, their joys and sorrows, hopes and aspirations. The third and the most important factor which contributed to his popularity was his humanism. He portrays even bad characters with such sympathy that the reader is more inclined to feel sorry for them than to condemn them. For this reason

Saratchandra was maligned by some people as painting sin and wickedness in attractive colours and thus corrupting people !

Saratchandra has said, "It is true that my irregular life has caused me much pain and loss. But this was more than compensated for by the people I met. They taught me that man was not simply a bundle of faults, sin and wickedness. They gave me a glimpse of the real man behind all this wickedness and sin. Let not my writings insult this real man !"

Jarasandha, the noted Bengali writer, as a college student, met Saratchandra once. The talk turned to Saratchandra's female characters some of whom were of bad morals according to the accepted social standards. Saratchandra said : "When somebody refers to a woman as immoral, I experience a pang deep down within me !"

In Saratchandra's novels we find a portrayal of society as existed during the last quarter of the last century and the first quarter of this century. It is a largely feudal society with the Zemindars as the uncrowned monarchs of the villages within their jurisdiction. They could do what they liked with the people. The moneyed people lent out money to needy persons at high rates of interest and ultimately usurped the little property that the latter had possessed. People were wallowing in ignorance and for that very reason could not understand where their true interests lay. These poor illiterate people were tempted by mischief-mongers into protracted and costly litigation out of vanity and a misguided sense of dignity and wasted away their scarce resources. The religion as practised by them had lost all its substance and only its lifeless frame remained in the form of obsolete customs and meaningless rituals. Marriage was an expensive affair. Girls who could not be married off before they reached their teens were called 'Araksaniya' and treated as unclean. Families who could not marry off such girls were excommunicated. In this way the social conventions harassed the poor but the richer and more influential people were not affected by them even though they transgressed all the accepted social conventions. On the other hand they continued to harass the poor people in the name of same conventions.

In *Palli-Samāj* Bēṇī Ghōṣāl, though immoral, corrupt and wicked himself, is able to tyrannise over others because of his wealth and social status as a Zemindar. People not so rich, like Gōbinda Gānguli and Dharmadās join him in lording it over the others on the strength of their high caste. The common people are powerless against these pests of society.

Chandranāth's uncle Maniśankar tells Chandranāth : "Society ? You and I are the society ! Whoever has got money is the leader of society !"

Saratchandra's views on society find expression through his characters on appropriate occasions. For example, we may presume that Biśwēśwari of *Palli-Samāj* generally expresses Saratchandra's views on man and society.

Ramēś is concerned at the pitiable condition of his village and works for its improvement. In the course of his work he met with opposition and calumny caused by ignorance, selfishness and vested interests. His loving nature is mistaken for cowardice, and generosity for foolishness. The very people whom he wants to help do not hesitate to take undue advantage of his kindness and to cheat him. Incensed and at the same time depressed at the ingratitude of such people he feels like giving up and going away for good. But on every such occasion Biśwēśwari counsels him against despair and makes him go back to his work with renewed energy. She points out that the poor illiterate ignorant villagers are so simple and ignorant that they cannot even recognise their benefactor and do not know where their true interests lie. Such people are deserving more of pity than of anger. She advises Ramēś to forget his educational and social status and to identify himself with the poor wretched people around him. This is the only way in which he can win their confidence and render them real help.

We know that Saratchandra practised these precepts in his own life. Whether in Bihar, or Burma, or Bengal, wherever he lived, he identified himself with the common people and did his best to alleviate their sufferings, and rendered them all help.

It is not easy for Ramēś to follow Biśwēśwari's advice. He finds himself opposed at every step by schemers like Bēṇi Ghōṣāl who manage to send him to jail on a trumped-up charge. But ultimately Biśwēśwari turns out to be a true prophet. The lethargic diffident people of the village are awakened to their inner strength by the noble self-sacrifice of Ramēś. They regain their self confidence and unite themselves against the reactionary forces. Their unanimous boycott of the Puja at Ramā's house is the first demonstration of their new-found unity and strength. A common man like Sanātan Hāzrā dares to give expression to his opinion of Bēṇi Ghōṣāl in his face. Another man, who is incensed by the iniquitous plots hatched by Bēṇi, attacks the latter and hurts him. Ramēś is venerated as if he were a messenger of God. Schools are opened in the different villages and measures are taken for improving sanitation. People learn to settle their mutual disputes by local arbitration instead of ruinous litigation.

Another significant result of Ramēś's incarceration is Ramā's conversion. From the very beginning Ramā has a soft corner for Ramēś and respects him too. But she is so much attached to her property that she does not hesitate to adopt questionable methods to add to the same, knowing fully well that Ramēś does not approve of her actions. But when she finds Ramēś suffering calumny and going to jail on a false charge, a development to which she too had contributed, she feels genuinely sorry for what she has done and turns over a new leaf. The humanism that had been dormant in her is awakened by Ramēś's example. At last, before leaving her village, she hands over her brother to Ramēś's charge and requests Ramēś to bring him up in his (Ramēś's) own way.

But Ramēś's efforts fail to convert Bēṇi, the arch-villain of the novel. True, he comes over to Ramēś's side after Ramēś comes out from prison, but that is due to the fact that he now realises that Ramēś's side has become stronger and that it will be to his advantage not to antagonise him any longer. But his character does not change. He continues to remain the same old schemer, prepared to do anything to attain his selfish ends. He tries to enlist Ramēś's support, gobbles up some property belonging to Ramā, and also excommunicates her on a calumnious charge against her. Bēṇi's example just proves that there are some incorrigible Satans in our midst.

Saratchandra has shown in his novels how religion as practised by us has strayed far from humanism and is reduced to mere rituals and conventions which have only dehumanised us and made brutes of us.

Ramā is a deeply religious woman. She punctiliously observes the prescribed rituals but that does not deter her from adopting questionable means for increasing her wealth. For her, as for others also, there is no contradiction between religion and foul play. For the sake of a few hundred rupees she is willing to let the flood waters destroy the standing crops and thus deprive a number of poor families of their livelihood. When Ramēś comes forward to break open the dam, she sends her men to stop him. She does not hesitate to tell a lie to usurp Ramēś's share of fish.

Chandranāth is a good man. But his belief in the social conventions and fear of public opinion make him cowardly and fruitless. He becomes so hard-hearted that he has no compunction in asking Sarayū to take poison. For years after he had driven out Sarayū, then pregnant, he does not care to enquire about her welfare. He does not even care to make

sure that sufficient money is being sent to her for maintenance. When he is told by Haridayāl that Sarayū is living in Kailās Bābu's house, the first question he asks is about Kailās Bābu's age. Not that he does not trust Sarayū; only he is afraid of what people would say if Sarayū is living in the house of a young man.

Haridayāl is steeped in the conservative tradition and is a firm believer in accepted conventions. Moreover, he derives his livelihood by helping the pilgrims to perform the prescribed religious rituals. He is not a stranger to noble feelings. He feels pity for Sarayū's mother and offers her shelter. But when he comes to know the whole story about her, he becomes a completely different man. When the helpless Sarayū, driven out by Chandranāth, approaches him for shelter, he pitilessly refuses to give the poor pregnant girl shelter even for a single night. His religious beliefs, fear of public opinion and, above all, anxiety about his means of livelihood combine to make a monster of him. He even stoops so low as to suggest that she may make a living by immoral means.

The fact that ultimately Sarayū got shelter with Kailās Bābu who does not share the popular ideas of virtue, vice, paradise, hell, caste, etc., is not just coincidence. It was only because Kailās Bābu did not believe in the accepted conventions that he could offer refuge to the daughter of an 'immoral' woman. A state of affairs in which only a person who does not believe in religion can act in a human way is a sad commentary on the decadent condition of religion as practised by the people.

Another moving instance of how social customs and conventions dry up the fountain of the innate humanism of human beings and pervert their natural nobility may be seen in Arakṣaniyā. Durgā is an ideal mother. She has undergone much hardship and suffering in bringing up Jnanadā who is her only hope and justification for existence. She shows exemplary fortitude and courage in resisting the vile attempts of her brother to marry off Jnanadā to an old rogue. When her hopes of Atul marrying Jnanadā are dashed to pieces she is so overwhelmed with anger and disappointment that she forgets her innate shyness and reserve so far as to pick up an unseemly quarrel with Atul in the presence of others. As time passes without any prospect of her daughter's marriage she becomes embittered and bursts out in bouts of bad temper against her darling child. She becomes unmotherly enough to curse her daughter. When she is faced with the threat of Jnanadā's excommunication which would disqualify the latter for the performance of Durgā's funeral obsequies, Durgā breaks down completely and implores her brother-in-law to marry Jnanadā off to an old widower!

The metamorphosis that takes place in Jnanadā is also equally shocking. This shy girl who has borne herself amidst all difficulties and trials with calm dignity and courage loses her self-possession at the imminent prospect of her own excommunication and the effect it would have on her mother. She demeans herself so far as to dress herself up like a cheap girl to make herself attractive to the prospective bridegroom!

On the problem of caste Saratchandra appears to be a conservative. Bīśwēśwarī is a firm believer in religious rituals and the caste system. When Ramēś, who believes in neither, points out the difference in status caused by caste, she brushes aside Ramēś's objection and says; "The people of low caste don't worry about their caste, nor do they envy the higher castes". She wants Ramēś not to worry about caste distinctions but to concentrate all his efforts towards educating the people.

Saratchandra portrays in a moving manner how poor Hindu families with unmarried girls had to suffer owing to the prevailing conventions concerning marriage. But he does not offer any solution to these problems. It is of course not necessary that a writer should also propose solutions to the problems he poses in his writings. But the fact that he does not have a solution makes the conclusion of some of his novels unsatisfactory.

Dēbdās loves Pārbatī, and Śēkhar of *Parīṇītā* loves Lalitā. But both these lovers do not dare to reveal their love to their fathers. Inevitably Dēbdās's life ends tragically. The conduct of Śēkhar is still more reprehensible. He makes the simple Lalitā believe that she is his wife. When she is prepared for any sacrifice for his sake, he does not muster up the courage to assert himself and avow openly his love for her. He passively allows his father to arrange for his marriage with another girl, knowing fully well that Lalitā's life would be ruined for ever in that case. It is only because of the sudden death of Śēkhar's father that the marriage of Lalitā with Śēkhar becomes possible. One feels that Saratchandra has made Śēkhar's father die just to bring about a happy ending. We feel unhappy that Śēkhar gets Lalitā of whom he is totally unworthy.

Similarly, the conclusion of *Arakṣaṇīyā* also fails to satisfy. When the novel opens we find Atul in love with Jnanadā, though she is not beautiful in the accepted sense. Later we come to know that Jnanadā once nursed him through a dangerous illness and saved him from death. So his love for her is partly due to his gratitude for her selfless service. But this love is not strong enough to withstand social pressures and the change for the worse in Jnanadā's looks. He does not hesitate to insult her in the presence of others. Towards the end of the novel, however, he is portrayed as feeling sorry for his treatment of Jnanadā. His conversion is complete when he watches Durgā's body being reduced to ashes at the cremation ground. There is an ancient saying about the undependability of *Smashan Bairagya*. One wonders whether Atul's conversion can be depended upon as sincere and whether it is right for Jnanadā to entrust herself to such a fickle-minded husband. The ending of the novel appears to be contrived and unsatisfactory. But how else could Saratchandra have solved the problem of Jnanadā?

The heroes of the novels *Chandranāth*, *Dēbdās*, *Parīṇītā*, and *Arakṣaṇīyā* are not attractive personalities. They are lacking in manly qualities and do not deserve the heroines who are all portrayed as patient, strong and good. On the whole in Saratchandra's women are presented in a more favourable light than men. Is this because he had more faith in woman as a species?



# சரத்சந்திரரும் இன்றைய தமிழ் இலக்கியமும்

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கோகலே அவர்கள் ஒரு சந்தர்ப்பத்தில் கூறியுள்ளார்; “இன்று வங்கம் சிந்திப்பதை, நாளை பாரதம் சிந்திக்கும்.” அரசியல் பற்றிய கூற்றாய் இருப்பினும் இது சிந்தனை, சமயம், இலக்கியம், சமூகம் இத்துறைகளில் முன்னேற்றம் கண்ட வங்கத்திற்கு சாலப் பொருந்தும். இந்தியாவில் எந்த எழுச்சி மூண்டாலும், அதன் துடிப்பு வங்க நாட்டில்தான் முதலில் தோன்றுகிறது. அதன் ஒப்பற்ற தலைவர்களே அதற்கு வழிகாட்டிகளாய் விளங்குகின்றனர். இந்நூற்றாண்டின் தொடக்கத்தில் வேதாந்த கேசரியான விவேகானந்த சுவாமியும் அவர் உருவாக்கிய ராமகிருஷ்ண இயக்கமும் தமிழ் நாட்டில் பல இளைஞர்களை வெகுவாய்த் தம்பால் ஈர்த்து வங்க நாட்டையும் அதன் பண்பாட்டையும் அறிந்து கொள்ளத் தூண்டின. மகாகவி சுப்ரமணிய பாரதியார் இத்தகையோருள் ஒருவர். மற்றொருவர் திரு. மஹேசுரமார சர்மா (பள்ளிகொண்டை குப்புஸ்வாமி என்பது அவருடைய தமிழ்ப் பெயர்) அடக்கமாகத் தம் பணிகளைச் செய்வார். தமிழராயிலும் இவர் சிந்தனையிலும் சொல்லிலும், செயலிலும் ஒரு மகமகனாகவே மாறிவிட்டார். வங்கத்தைப் பற்றிக் தமிழர் அறிவதற்கு முதன்முதலாக வழி கொளியவர் இவரே. 1900 ஜில் பிரபல வங்க நாவலின் பிரதான பங்கிம் சந்திரரின் நவீனங்களான ஆனந்த மடத்தையும் சந்திரசேகரனையும் அற்புதமான கவிழில் பெயர்த்துக் கந்தவர் இவருடைய நண்பரான பாரதியார் ஆனந்த மடத்தில் வரும் வந்தேமாதா கீதத்திற்கு ஓர் அழகிய தமிழ் வடிவத்தைத் தந்து உதவினார். இவ்விரு நூல்களால் தமிழர் உள்ளத்தில் கதேசப்பற்று கிளர்ந்தெழுந்தது. அந்நன்னைக் கொங்கி தமிழர் வங்கத்தையும் அதன் மக்களையும் போற்றத் தொடங்கினர். 1935 வரை பங்கிமின் புகழ் தமிழ் நாட்டில் நிலவி வந்தது. பின்னர் இந் சூர்வம் குறைந்து மக்கள் வங்கத்தையே மறந்தொழிந்தனர். வியப்பு என்னவெனில், வங்க நாட்டில் சரத் சந்திரரின் புகழ் நன்கு ஊன்றிவிட்ட சமயம், தமிழருக்கு அவரைப் பற்றிய செய்தியே தெரியவில்லை. அச்சமயம் தமிழகத்தில் இலக



கிய வளர்ச்சியே குன்றி ஒரு தேக்க நிலை ஏற்பட்டிருந்தது. தொன்மையானதும் வளமிக்கதுமான தமிழ் இலக்கியத்தில் அன்று ஒரு பங்கிமைப் போலவோ, ஒரு டாகுரைப் போலவோ, ஒரு சரத் சந்திரரைப் போலவோ, சிறந்த எழுத்தாளர் எவருமே தோன்றவில்லை. அறிவாளிகளான தமிழ் ரிடையே ஆங்கிலந்சான் புடந கியது. வங்கம் ஆற்றியது போல் அவர்கள் தம் தாய்மொழியில் புதுமைக கருத்துடைய எந்த இலக்கியத்தையும் படைக்கவில்லை. உண்மை வாழ்க்கையிலிருந்து கம் களைகளுக்கான பொருளை எடுத்து ஷோடசீ, கமலா, அசலா, ஸௌதாமிநீ, பாரதீ, பிந்து பாணிநீ டையா என்ற உன்னத பெண்பாத்திரங்களை வைத்து உணர்ச்சி கதும்பும் வகையில் நவீ னங்களைப் புட ந்திருக்கும் ஒரு வங்க சிற்பி அக்காலத்தில் உலவி வந்ததையே அறியார்.

எனது நற்காலமெனக் கூறவேண்டும்தான்: நான் வங்க மொழியை கசடறக் கற்றேன். வங்க நாட ல் மனதைச் சுமியுருகரு புரியுமபடிச் செய்வதற்கான திறமையைப் பெற்றேன். என்னு டைய மொழிபெயர்ப்புகள் வாயிலாக இதனைச் சாதித்தேன். பல வங்க எழுத்தாளர்களின் நூல்களைக் துளைந்து படிக்கும் வாய்ப்பு ஏற்பட்டது. என்னை மிகவும் கவர்ந்தவருள் ஒருவர் சரத் சந்திரர். பங்கிமை விட முற்றிலும் மாறான சிந்தனைப்போகருடையவர். எளியவர், தாழ்ந்தோர், பழுதியவர், இவர்கள்பால் அநுதாபம் கொண்டு இவர்களது அந்தாங்கத்தைப் புரிந்தவராய் அருமை இலக்கியங்களைப் படைத்தவர். பங்கிமின் கதாபாத்திரமான சைவனிதி இவர் கையில் சிக்கியிருப்பின், அவள் முற்றிலும் வேறுவகையாகவே மாறியிருப்பாள். பங்கிம் செய்யத் தயங் கியதை இவர் செயதே இருப்பார். வாசகர்களுக்கு இவர் உபதேசம் செய்வதில்லை; கதை போக்கிற்கிடையே அவர் குறிக்கிடுவதில்லை. இவர் வாசகனிடம் எதிர்பார்ப்பது, குணசித்திரங் களின் மனதை உணர்ந்து அவர்கள் பால் அநுதாபமும் மென்மையும் கொள்வதேயாம். அல்லாத ஓர் உலகினைப் படைத்து நன்மை நலமதில்முடியும், தீயது தீம்பாகவே முடியுமென்ற போக்கை இவர் விரும்பாதவர். சரத்சந்திரரின் இந்த மாயாசக்தியைக் கண்டு நான் திகைப்புற்றேன்.

இந்நூற்றுண்டின் முப்பதாவது பகுதியில் தமிழகத்தில் நல்ல பத்திரிகைகள் என்ற பெய ருக்கு கலைமகளும் ஆனந்தவிகடன்மே இருந்தன. கூறப்போனால் இவ்விரு சஞ்சிகைகளே புதிய எழுத்துக்கும், இளம் எழுத்தாளருக்கும் இடம் தந்தன. தனித்தமிழ்ப் பித்துடைய சிலர் வெளியி டித்துக் கருத்துக்களை துளியேனும் புக மறுத்தனர். ஆனால் காலம் மாறியது: மறுமலர்ச்சிக்கான அறிகுறி செரிந்தது. பழையன கழிந்து புதியன தோன்றியது. இதுவே தக்க தருணமென சரத் சந்திரரை தமிழ் இலக்கியத்தில் அறிமுகம் செய்வித்தேன். ஆனந்த விகடனின் ஆசிரியர் 'கல்கி' (திரு. ரா. கிருஷ்ணமூர்த்தி) பரந்த நோக்குடையவர். தமிழில் பிறநாட்டு இலக்கியங்கள் வரவேண்டுமென்ற ஆர்வமுடையவர்; இளம் எழுத்தாளர்பால் பரிவு டையவர். அவரை அணுகி நான் சரத்சந்திரரின் பல நவீனங்களிலிருந்து சாரமான பகுதிகளைப் படித்து விளக் கினேன். தமிழ் மக்கள் இவற்றைக்கட்டாயம் ரசிப்பார்கள்; பிற்காலத்து எழுத்தாளர்களை இவை போன்ற உன்னத படைப்புகள், ஊக்குமென்று உரைத்தேன்.

அக்காலத்தில் தமிழ் நாவல்கள் என்று சொல்வதற்கு பி. ராஜமய்யர், பொன்னுசாமி நாயகர், மாபூரம் ராமசாமி ஐயர், நடேச சாஸ்திரி இவர்களுடைய ஆக்கங்களே இருந்தன.

மக்கள் அவற்றை அவ்வளவாக ரசிக்கவில்லை. பழைய சம்சாரக் கதைகளே நாவல் அளவிற்கு நீண்டு விட்டவை. பாத்திரப்படைப்பில் அவர்கள் அவ்வளவாக கவனம் செலுத்தவில்லை.

இந்நூற்றாண்டின் முப்பதாம் பகுதி மத்தியில் இளம் எழுத்தாளர் கோஷ்டி ஒன்று எந்த எதிர்ப்புக்கும் அஞ்சாமல் உறங்கும் தமிழ் இலக்கியத்தைத் தட்டி எழுப்பத் தங்கணம் கட்டிக் கொண்டனர். இவர்களுள் சிலர் பன்மொழி வல்லுநர். உலகத்து இன்றைய இலக்கியப்போக்கு, பாணி, மரபு இவற்றை நன்கு அறிந்தவர்.

ஆனந்தவிகடன் ஆசிரியர் 'கல்கி' தம் பத்திரிகையில் இத்தகையோருக்குக் கவாடத்தைத் திறந்துவிட்டார். தமிழ் இலக்கியம் உயிர்வாழ்வதற்கு நல்ல காற்று புக இடம் அளித்தார். நான் தமிழாக்கிய சரத்சந்திரரின் 'பிந்துர்சேலே' அமூல்யன் என்ற பெயரில் தொடர்ந்து வெளியாகியது. ஆனந்த விகடனில் ரசிகமக்களிடையே மேலும் ஆவல் எழுந்தது சரத்சந்திரரின் மற்ற நூல்களைப்படிக்க. அடுத்தது 'ஸ்வாமி' என்ற நவீனம் 'ஸௌ தாமினி' என்ற பெயரில் அதே பத்திரிகையில் வந்தது. இந்நவீனத்தில் காம்பத்திய உறவில் காணும் சிக்கலும் ஆழ்ந்த மனோதைத்து வடும் வெகுவாய் வாசகர்களுக்காக உத்ய விருந்தாக இருந்தது. சரத்சந்திரர் நவீனங்களைப் புனையும் புத்தியும், கலைத்திறனும், பாத்திரப் படைப்புத் தெற்றெனப் புலாயின. பிரபல இலக்கிய மாத இதழான 'கலைமகள்' சரத்சந்திரரின் ஒரு நவீனத்தைத் தமிழாக்க என்னை அழைத்தாள்.

அது எனக்கு ஒரு நல்லநாள். 'பைரவி' என்றபெயரில் சரத்தின் "தேநா பாவநா" தொடர்ந்து வந்தது. புத்தக வடிவில் அந்நூல் பிரசுரமாகிய போது அதனை பி.ஏ. வகுப்பிற்கு தமிழ் உபபாடய-ஈ நிருவாககூர் பல்கலைக்கழகம் தேர்ந்து எடுத்தது.

காந்திமஹான் நவீனங்கள் கதைகள் என்றால் சற்றும் விரும்பாதவர். ஆனால் அத்தகையவரையும் சரத்தின் சில நவீனங்கள் கவர்ந்தது ஆச்சரியமே. அவற்றைப் பள்ளிகளில் பாடபுத்தகங்களாக வைக்க சிபாரிசும் செய்தார். சரத்பாபு தம் நவீனங்கள் வாயிலாக சமூகசீர்திருத்தத்தைக் கொணரும் கருத்துடையவர் என்பதை மகாத்மா நன்கு உணர்ந்தவர்.

சரத்சந்திரரின் புகழ் தமிழகமெங்கும் பரவி ஓ. தம்போது ஹிந்திகற்ற சில தமிழ் எழுத்தாளர்கள் அவருடைய நாவல்களை மா மடவென மொழி பெயர்த்துத் தள்ளி மார்க்கெட்டில் விலை போக்கக் குவித்தனர். ஒரே நூலை இரண்டு மூன்று பேர் தமிழாக்கியதும் உண்டு. இந்தப் போட்டியால் வெளிச்சமாவது, சரத்சந்திரருக்கு அத்துனை மதிப்பு தமிழ் நாட்டில். ஆனால் ஹிந்தியிலிருந்து ஆக்கிய இவை, ஆராய்ப்புகின் இவற்றிற்கு உரிய தரம் எவருக்கும் நன்கு புரியும். நான் "பதேர்தாபி", "பூகாந்த" என்ற சரத்தின் புதுப் போக்கான நவீனங்களை ஏறக்குறைய தமிழில் முடித்தபோது ஒரு நூலகம் இவ்வினா மொழிபெயர்ப்புகளை விற்பனைக்குக் கொண்டு வந்து விட்டது. ஒன்று குறிப்பிட வேண்டும். என்னுடைய சகோதரர் திரு. த. நா. ஸௌநாபதி (இன்று "மஞ்சரி" ஆசிரியராக இருப்பவர்) போற்றும் வகையில் சரத்பாபுவின் "சேஷ பிரசன்ம்" என்ற நாவலைத் தமிழ் வடிவில் கொணர்ந்தார்.

எஞ்சிய சரத்சந்திரரின் நூல்களை மற்றவர்கள் பயன்படுத்திக் கொள்ள விட்டதும் நான், அவரது விசித்திர வாழ்க்கை, தேசப்பற்று, பெண் இனத்திடம் அவர் கொண்டிருந்த மதிப்பான கருத்து, அவருடைய கதாபாத்திரங்களைக் குறித்த திறனாய்வு-இவை போன்ற விஷயங்களைக் கட்டுரையாகப் பல பத்திரிகைகளில் எழுதி வந்தேன். முக்கியமாக 'மஞ்சரி' யில் 1948-ல் வெளியான கட்டுரைகளைக் குறிப்பிடலாம். தமிழ்க்கலை மன்றங்களிலும், சிந்தனை வட்டங்களிலும் சரத்சந்திரரைப் பற்றி பல உரைகளை ஆற்றி தமிழ் மக்கள் அவரைத் தெரிந்துக் கொள்வதற்கான வாய்ப்பைச் செய்தேன்.

அவ்வளவு என்? அற்புத நவீனங்களைப் புனைந்த இந்த மாயாவியின் மந்திரத்தில் கட்டுண்டவர்களில் நானும் ஒருவன். என்னுடைய இலக்கியப் படைப்புச் சிலவற்றுள் அவரது சாயம் நிறைய ஏறி இருக்கிறது.

“சரித்ரஹீன” என்ற நவீனத்தை அவர் புனையும்போது, வங்க நாட்டவர் முகத்தை சிணுக்கிக் கொண்டார்கள். பத்திரிகைகளும் அதனை வெளியிட துணியவில்லையாம். அந்த நிலை நான் எனது நவீனமான கானல் நீருக்கும் ஏற்பட்டது கெட்ட பெயர்.

சரத்சந்திரர் இன்றைய தமிழ் எழுத்தாளருக்குப் புதிய நோக்கின் ஓர் ஊற்று வாயைத் திறந்து விட்டவர். அவருடைய பிரபாவத்தை இவர்கள் உணராது போனாலும், தமக்குத் தெரியாமலே இவர்கள் அவர் கோவிய பாதையிலேயே செல்கின்றனர். பெண் பாத்திரங்களை இவர்கள் உருவாக்கும் போது பழைய கருத்துக்களை உதறித் தள்ளிவிட்டு புதிய நோக்குடன்-யதார்த்தமாக அவற்றைப் படைக்கின்றனர்; படிமை பித்தர்களின் உறுமலுக்கு அஞ்சவில்லை.

இன்று சரத்சந்திரரைப்பற்றி அறியாத தமிழார்வமுள்ளவர் எவருமே இல்லை. தமிழ் வடிவில் அவரைப் படித்து இன்புறுகின்றனர் மக்கள். இன்னும் ஒரு நூற்றாண்டு தமிழகத்தில் அவரது புகழ் ஒங்கியே நிற்கும்.

# Saratchandra and Tamil literature

T N Kumaraswamy

It was Gokhale who said 'What Bengal thinks today, India will think tomorrow'. Though it is uttered as a political dictum, it is equally applicable to the progress of Bengal in the fields of thought, religion, literature and society. Any upheaval in India had its origin in Bengal guided by its great men. In the beginning of this century the lion of *Vedanta*, Swami Vivekananda, and the Ramakrishna movement attracted many enthusiastic youths of the Tamil land to know more about Bengal and its culture. Our great national poet Subrahmanya Bharati was one among them. The unassuming silent worker and Sanskrit scholar Mahesha Kumar Sarma, another Tamilian, practically became a Bengali in thought, word, and deed. It was he who pioneered to bring the good influences of Bengal into this land. In 1900 he gave us the first superb Tamil version of Bankimchandra's two renowned novels *Anandamath* and *Chandrashekhar*. Those two books greatly stirred the patriotic hearts of the Tamil public. Poet Bharati rendered into beautiful Tamil the famous Vandemataram ode specially for his friend's Tamil *Anandamath*. Since that auspicious day Tamil lovers waited with avidity to read more and more of Bankimchandra's romantic stories. Till 1935 this craze for Bankimchandra was perceptible. But there was a setback after that and the Tamils forgot Bengal. Strange to say, when the fame of Saratchandra was sufficiently established in Bengal, Tamil Nadu knew nothing about him. That was a dull period in the history of modern Tamil literature, when no outstanding literary figure rose on the horizon. Though Tamil is a rich language with a glorious past, it cannot claim to have produced authors of the calibre of Bankimchandra, or Tagore, or Saratchandra. Tamil intellectuals who dabbled in English letters did not care to use their own mother tongue to create, as was done in Bengal, newer vogues in writing. They never knew that a writer of Bengal called Saratchandra wrote marvellous stories and novels depicting real life—an objective writer directing his observations upon characters and interpreting them in terms of human feeling. The man who depicted characters like Śōṛṇṇāṣī, Achalā, Saudāminī, Kamal, Bhārati, and Bindubāsinī, was not familiar to the Tamils.

I should say that it was my good fortune that I learnt Bengali and acquired enough proficiency in it to interpret the Bengali mind to the Tamils through my translations. When

I prepared myself to read prominent writers of modern Bengal, I discovered Saratchandra to be of a different quality of mind. Unlike Bankimchandra, he never intruded himself upon the readers. His aim was not to tell a story to entertain or touch our hearts but to force us to think and understand the deep and hidden significance of the problems of life. He was not of the type of novelists who took liberties to exaggerate, to create a world more beautiful, more consoling than ours. They wanted the good to end happily and the bad unhappily. That was what their fiction meant. I was almost staggered to find his wizardry in characterisation.

In the early thirties, Tamil was having only a few well-conducted magazines like Kalaimagal and Ananda Vikatan. In fact it was these two journals which fostered new writing by giving access to young writers. Other journals of the purist type did not like alien thoughts to enter into the Tamil culture or literature. The atmosphere was charged with conservatism and parochialism ; anything foreign was a taboo. There was no broad acceptance of facts, and it was difficult to push new ideas and new authors into our literature. But times had changed ; suddenly came a spurt among the younger writers of that generation, and the old order yielded place to the new. I found the opportune moment to bring Saratchandra's novels to the Tamils. The editor of Ananda Vikatan, 'Kalki' (R. Krishnamurthy), was a man with vision and pragmatic views. His sympathies were with the younger folk.

I approached him and read to him select passages from Saratchandra's various novels and explained to him that the Tamil public would surely relish them and it would open a new vista to the future novelists of Tamil Nadu. There were original novels of course, by Rajam Iyer, Natesa Sastry, Ramaswamy of Mayavaram, Ponnuswami Naicker, but really they were not well-made novels, they were simply homely stories stretched to the length of novels.

In the middle thirties, a coterie of intrepid youthful Tamil writers dedicated themselves to bring about a revolution in the stagnant Tamil literature. They were all conversant with the trend of modern thoughts and literary movements. Some among them were very good linguists. The able editor of Ananda Vikatan, 'Kalki', opened the window for them and fresh breeze began to blow in. My translation of Saratchandra's *Bindur Chhēlē* as *Amūlyan* was published serially in that weekly. The Tamil readers welcomed it with gusto. They asked for more ; next came, in the same magazine, my rendering of Saratchandra's *Swāmī* under the title *Saudāmiṇī*. The peculiar psychological aspect in dealing with conjugal problem was something new to the readers and so it whetted their appetite to know more of Saratchandra's master craft of fiction writing. It was really a great day for me when I was invited by the editor of Kalaimagal, a high class literary monthly magazine, to contribute a novel of Saratchandra to its pages. I translated *Dēnā-Pāōnā* as *Bhairabi* for Kalaimagal. When it came out in book form later, it had the distinction of being prescribed as non-detailed text for B.A. by the Travancore University. Mahatma Gandhi, though not a lover of fiction, was deeply impressed after reading some of Saratchandra's writings, and recommended them to be prescribed as text books in schools. Perhaps he was well aware that Saratchandra had great ideas of social reforms at heart which he gave out through his novels.

When Saratchandra's name shot up into glory, many Tamil writers who only knew Hindi invaded the book market with cheap translations of Saratchandra's novels. Even two or more authors brought out different renderings of the same novel. This keen competition showed the popularity of Saratchandra in Tamil Nadu. If examined, these versions of his novels done from Hindi would reveal the quality of the stuff. When I was intending to translate *Pathēr Dābī* and *Śrikānta*, I found to my chagrin that they had already come out in the market. I have to mention here a translation of one of Saratchandra's novels. My brother, T. N. Senapati, has creditably done his job of rendering *Śēṣ Praśna* into Tamil.

After leaving Saratchandra for others to exploit, I turned my attention to write his life sketch, and an assessment of his works. They came as articles in *Manjari*, a Tamil monthly digest. I had condensed some five or six long and short novels of Saratchandra like *Pariṇītā*, *Birāj Bau*, *Paḷli-Samāj*, etc., for the same journal. I participated in many literary forums and seminars and my talks about the various aspects of Saratchandra's fiction were appreciated.

In a large way I am one of those writers of Tamil Nadu who had come under the magic spell of Saratchandra, that wizard of fiction writing and weaver of unique female characters. My own novels were greatly tinged with his hues. Like *Charitrahin* of Saratchandra my novel *Kaanalnir* ( *Mirage* ) had also earned odium as a bad book, an immoral piece of writing. Saratchandra had opened the floodgate of inspiration to the younger generation of Tamil writers. Though they are not aware of subtle influence, they are treading his path unconsciously. They have become bold in the delineation of characters, particularly of women.

The name of Saratchandra is still a household word among the Tamil readers. His novels are popular and are enjoyed even to this day. His hallowed name will live in Tamil land for another century.



# శరచ్చంద్ర చటర్జీ-ఒక అంచనా

కె. వి. రమణారెడ్డి

రవీంద్రనాథ టాగూరు గిరినిలు తొక్కుకుంటూ పచ్చని శరీరచ్చంద్ర చటర్జీ అయిది కవి మహిమనుండి ప్రభావము నుండి ఎటుదూరది సొంతదారి తొక్కిండును సహజంగానే ప్రయత్నంబాడు త్వరలోనే దీని నాధులచేసేగాను, ప్రతిష్ఠలోగాను, ప్రజాభిమానం చిహ్నులలో ఆ సలపన్న సాహిత్యకావ్యణ్ణి మంచునాథా పోయెను

రవీంద్రనాథ, శరీరచ్చంద్రుడూ ప్రతిదాశలోనూ వేర్వేరుసమీపాను చిన్నంలో, మంశిములో, అభిషేకంలో, దృక్పథములో, విశ్వాసులో, తత్త్వంలో, అన్తలితమైన ప్రణయాస్మి, అమలినమైన సంపద్యాస్మి నెలకొనితంగా వెనువెగిలిపోయిన అలాగే జీవ రవీంద్రుడు షాజాముందిరి హాశీయము అయినది ఎంతగా యిత్తుంచినప్పటికీ, తాను సేలమూచి అయినది ముసలైపోయాడు పశాల విశ్వధావన రవీంద్రుని సాహిత్య పదార్థానికి మూల కందమైంది; దానిలో నీసిన అతినాజ్ఞాకుల దూకులాలు ఆయన స్త్రీ పురుష వాక్తర దేహాలకు మహాతేలిక మూత్రమే గాక ఎంతో అవాస్తవికంగా కూడా కనిపించాయి రవీంద్రుడు తన ప్రపంచంలో భావాలనూ, స్వప్నాలనూ, కామాలనూ మునుపలుగా చెప్పినవికంటే, అవి ఎంత మనమైనవి అయినా ఉత్తమమైనవి అయినా మునుపటిమైన వాస్తవానికి కంటే మోహన రవీంద్రుని 'దివ్య' సవాసానికి అమితే మూల 'గగనసింహు.' నూక్షిలలో చెప్పాలంటే, రవీంద్రుడు తన పరి ప్రతిష్ఠకు చందమిట్టి తన సుతుడు ఛే సంపత్కరాల జీవితకాలలో మెంకలలోనూ ఇతిరత్రానూ భూమిని దోచి చలనన ఈ పరాస్థ కందన సర్కారు దేశానికి ప్రనాదించబోయింది మన "పురుషోత్తమము" చాలామట్టుకు ఈ పరిము పెట్టిన బక్షి. పూర్తిగా పరాయిదిగాకున్నా పదేటి వాసనలందుకున్న ఈ పరిము, తన పలుచలను పరాధను ప్రజాకోట్రాచు మోమం, వాతి కొత్తల రాక్షసులంగా ఈ పలువలకు త్వరలోనే దేశీయత చెకూరింది, ఈ పరిపు పిశారీ స్వభావానికి తగినట్లుగానే ఆ రాక్షసిగింప సామప్రదాయక ఆహుతికల పూర్తిగా కనిపి పోవనాపోయాయి అలాగలన పోకుంటే ఇచ్చి పుచ్చుకోలు పద్ధతిలో ఎంతోవీని ఆహుతులూ మార్చి మార్చి ఎటులైతూ పచ్చాయి 'హిందూమేళా' వెనువేంటనే రవీంద్రుని మార్మికి ఆహుతికల వెలుపడితిము దినక అనుభూమెన పోయెను

శరీరచ్చంద్ర చటర్జీ పుట్టిపెరిగిన దాపవాకాపరిల స్వప్నంగా శిష్టకాలముకి చెందినట్టిది దాని సామాజిక వ్యాప్తి ఎటునెక్కుటకమెంది. కుగ్రామాలలోనూ, మహానగరాల మురికివాడలలోనూ, సాదాసల జీవించే యిద్దారజీవితానికి ఎంతో మార్పెమైంది. రవీంద్రునిది మహాసంగరంమైతే



శరచ్చంద్రునిది సగిరోపాంత స్థలం. విజయగానూ, కల్పనలోనూ అచ్చం పెట్టి బూర్జువాలోకం. ఉన్నతవర్గాలు దీనిలోకి దిగి రావడమనేది క్యాబిన్లకు, కాగా ఇంజనీరులది మోటికీ కిటికీ పోవడం మాత్రం అలాగాదు. ఇందులో కనిపించే ఉద్యోగానికి తిరుగుబాటు తత్వానికి, బదిలీనా బజారులోనూ, ఇంటాబుటా పనిలోనూ పలామణీ అపుతూ పచ్చిన భూస్వామిక-బూర్జువా విలువలను చిట్టచివరకు ఆమోదించి తలదాల్చే వైఖరికి కూడా కారణం ఇదే. పనినిపెట్టడం పట్టించుకున్నా, ఎంతరిగా కాదుకూడదన్నా, మూలంలో ఇది వలన సంస్కృతి.

దీనిపట్ల పట్టించుకోని మోటికీ వైఖరికి శరచ్చంద్రుని వైఖరికి భేదాత్మకత లేకపోలేదుగానీ, భేదం కొందరినేట్లు అభాతంలాంటి దేమా కాదు పట్టించుకోని శరచ్చంద్రునికే సేవల అనుమతి ప్రాయముగా నవ్వమైన సమరణవంటివాడిని ఈ అర్థములో భావించవచ్చు. విప్లవకారుడే మాటకుగల సంపూర్ణమైన అర్హత అట్టి చూస్తే, పరిధిలో ఏ ఒక్కరూ సామాజిక విప్లవ కారులు కాదు. నేటిలాగే వీరి జీవితకాలంలో కూడా, పనివాళ్ళు సర్వహించుకున్న పరాయి ఇంజనీరులకు చారిత్రక రంగస్థలం మూలాల్లోనే ఉండిపోయాయి. సంశయగ్రస్తుడైన విప్లవవాది అయినంతగా శరచ్చంద్రుడు పూర్వోపాధ్యాయ పరిపాకాడు కాదన్నంత మాత్రాన ఆయన మనశ్చేతనా తగ్గదు. రైతాంగిమూ శ్రామికవర్గమూ చారిత్రకంగా ముందుకు తోడుచే, తనకు తానే స్వతంత్రమైన పరిపాకరికాదు దిగిజాలిన పరాయిని సహజమైన లోటుపాటను మాత్రమే ఇది సూచిస్తుంది. కళ్ళెం కొని తన పోటిలో దూరకాన్డూటే దాన్ని తోసివేసేందుకు పూనుకున్న గుర్రంలా ఈ పరిపాకాడు తిరిగివచ్చు; సాంప్రదాయ మంటే ఎగిరి పడివచ్చు; శత్రు సేమలోకి సాహసోపేతమైన పండితాత్రిలు చేయవచ్చుకూడా, తిరిగివచ్చి అల్లడు రేపవచ్చు; మరెవ్వరన్నో చేయవచ్చు గానీ, మాత్రంబంగళా లాంటి హిందూ సమాజపు పునాదులను మాత్రం త్రవ్వమెయ్య లేదు ఇవన్నీ పీర్లకు కృత్యాలు అనిపించవచ్చు గానీ విమర్యాదకాదు కావలసినవే. ఎంతటి వ్యక్తివాడమైనా సరే చైతన్యమింతులైన ప్రజల సమష్టి కార్యాచరణకు ప్రత్యామ్నాయం కాజాలదు. తమ శక్తిని గుర్రెరిగినప్పుడు, ప్రజల నిర్మాణాన్ని కాపలక్షించి గానీ విప్లవసానికి దిగివచ్చి. మువతీ మువకులెందరో ఆచారాల, సంప్రదాయాల పట్టునుంచి ఒక్క ఉడుతున అయితున పోయేందుకు అనుమతించిన భావామయమైన ప్రమాదాలను ఎంతో సమర్థతతో చిత్రీకరించే రచయితగా శరచ్చంద్రునికీ గొప్పపన్నె. మున్సిప్రెమిచంద్ అంతటి వాస్తవవాది కాదుగానీ చింతించుచు ఉన్న పంటి కాలానికి పునపెద్దరినవాది కూడా కాదు ఇంతకూ తాను సాంప్రదాయవాదా" ఇది చాలా ముఖ్యమైన ప్రశ్న

సాంప్రదాయవాదమూ అభివృద్ధి నిరోధకత్వమూ సమానార్థాలు కావు. గతాన్నె పట్టుకొని వేలాడుతూ, సమాజాన్ని ఆదిమత్వానికి సంకల్ప పూర్వకంగా మిగ్గుల చూచేవాడు అభివృద్ధి నిరోధకుడు. ఏ సమాజ జీవితంలో నైనా కాలం పెట్టిన పరిక్షకు నిలచి చెగినట్లు తాను పరిశీలించి తేల్చిన వాటిని పదిలం చేసుకోలే పరిక్షణా పడుతు సాంప్రదాయవాది వెయ్యికిమైన ఆశాభంగము వల్లనో, పంతుల పల్లనో తల్లెడుతున్న పోసంత స్థితిగా సామాజిక పరిక్షకులు జీవితంలో నిలదొక్కుకుని ఉన్నాయి వాటిని పునర్వ్యవస్థీకరించే ముందు పరిపాలన పరిపాలన పరిపాలన సాగారం టాకు సాంప్రదాయవాది. దాని మూలధాతువు మీద చెయ్యి చేసుకుంటే, సమాజానికి గల హృదయపదార్థకు సశిస్తుంది అంటాడు. సజమైన సాంప్రదాయ వాదానికి గల జలహితాలు జాగ్రత్త, మెలకువ. శరచ్చంద్రునిలో లేనిది ఇదే. ఆయనను సాంప్రదాయవాది అనడము వల అది సాంప్రదాయ వాదానికి గానీ, ఇటు రచయితగానూ భాషకుమగానూ ఆయనకు గానీ పెన్నె చేకూరదు. ఎంత అల్లరిచేసి ఆరేడి పెట్టినా, సుర్రెతిసపు పోకెళ్ళెన్ని పోయినా, అపరిపక్వమనస్థితిలో తిరుగుబాటుకుదిగి విక్కిరించినా, ఆయనది జాగ్రత్తతో కూడిన పరిపాకాడే. కాకుంటే ఇది సాంప్రదాయ వాదానికి సమాన వర్తి అయింది. ఇదే మరొకప్పుడైన ఆయనది సాంప్రదాయకమైన పరిపాకాడే స్వవచోత్సాహాతిమూ ఇది" అయినా అది అంత. ఎక్కడు చేతుకున్న దానికీ ప్రమాదం గురించి శరచ్చంద్రుని ఉద్వేగం కలిగిన పరిపాకాడేవచ్చు, ఆయన సామాజిక వైఖరులను వెల్లడి చేస్తుంది అని నొప్పించుటాడు. మాతృదేశాని జీవితాన్ని పరిక్షణం చేసిన జాతి, మునుత వేదాలు బిన్న భావాలు ఒక్కొక్కటిగా వైదొలగి ఎవరికి వారి స్వార్థప్రవృత్తి ఒక్కటే ప్రజల పశ్చిమాలమైన ఆదిమ జీవనం మళ్ళీ అవతరించినట్లుగా పేరుగువాడులా ఆయనకు గోచరించింది ఇది ఇష్టారాజ్యము. దానిముందు ఎంత మర్యాదమో ఇదీ అంత నిజానికి దానిమీద గుడ్డిలో మెల్ల ఒడ్డిగా గానో, ఒడ్డికి లేకుండానో ఎలాగైతేనే సమాజ స్వరూపాన్ని ఇది

కవీనం నిలిపి ఉంచగలిగింది. ఇష్టారాజ్యము అలాగాదు; స్వేచ్ఛపరిధనే స్వేచ్ఛను హతమార్చింది. సంగనాచితవానికి లోపరికుండానే శరచ్చంద్రుడు ఖదురుబాటుతో కూడిన టుంబుబ జీపికాన్ని వరించాడు. ఇది మధ్య తరగతివారికి సహజమైన అభిలాష. ఆయన పితూరికి ఓటమి తప్పదు. ఎగురు పోతు చేష్టలు యావత్తూ టీ కప్పు తుపాక్షే. తీవ్రవాద్యాసాలు గాలికినుట్టా ఎన్నీ ఉంటేనేమి, పశ్చాత్తిపులై చివరికి మాత్రు చరణాల నన్నిధికి వచ్చి చేరివలసిందే! ఒక ముందడుగుకు రెండు వెనుకడుగులు అయితేనేం, ఈ మంగళాంతిమే కోరికగిలది కదా. ఉదాహరణకు “చరిత్రహీనులు”లో కిరణ్ణులు ఉంది. జీవితమంటే తీరని తృప్తతో అణుబణుపూ ప్రసరిపించి పోతుంది. ఎంతో తెలియించి. ఉత్సాహానికి కొంచెంలేదు. అణుద్దామన్నా అణగదు. అయితే కొనకు మతితప్పి పోవలసిందే. తాను ప్రేమించిన ఉపేంద్రుడు తనకు దక్కే అవకాశము లేనలేదు. ఇద్దరూ ఏవాహితలే. ఉపేంద్రుడు ఒక బొమ్మను పెళ్లాడాడు. కిరణ్ణులు ఒక జీవచ్ఛవాన్ని పెళ్లాడింది. పడుటూ అడ్డుకొని కూడా అతనిలాంటి అలోచనను ఏరికి కూడా రానివ్వదు. తాను శీలవంతుడు. ఈ శీలము నగుణముయితే కావచ్చు గాక దీనికి అమానుషత్వము అద్దంది. ఏవాహ దాహిలమైన భావాలు ఏమీ చొరబారినంతటి కారిన్యము అతనికి పట్టుబడింది. ఈ మాహామూర్తి కోసమనే అడ్డుతిమైన తన మనశ్శక్తిని సెవ్వావార్ని పనికిని కొట్టెంతగా కిరణ్ణులు రోపించింది. అక్రాపించింది. భర్తే దైవము. పురాణమే వేదమంతయు అనుకునే సరిదానిమంటి మండిమతితో తాను ఓడిపోవలసి పెట్టింది. తన అతిలోక సౌందర్యమూ అసాధారణ ప్రజ్ఞా తనకుపెక్కిరించలేదు కిరణ్ణులు మూడి వాలెన పెట్టింది. ‘పిప్రెలోర్’ సమాజ పరిపరిమాణ తాను చేసిన తిమిగుదాటు పరించగూడదు. తాను విద్వంసనా మూర్తిగాపడిమే ఇంచుకు కారణము. ఈ సరిలోనే సాపత్రినమద్దాని పరిమసాపిలైనా మూగబోయిన తిమిగుదాటు సాపత్రితో కనిపిస్తుంది. సాపత్రి భద్రపరిచిన శివ లాంటి తనది జీవస్మృత్తికృష్ణ పిచ్చారీ పద్ధాంతముందే ముటుచుకుపోయే పుష్ప. ఇదే దాదాకరము. ఒక్క సతేజుని స్ఫుర్తికే వెచ్చనవుతుంది. సతేజుని స్వర్ణకు కూడా జ్వాలగా పరిణమించలేదు. ముక్కు మొగిమయినా తెలియని వర్తి కోనమే ఇదంతా. ఈ ఏవాహ గాన ఎంత ప్రయోజన జూన్యం అయిందో అంత పరిపరగామయింది. తాను సతేజుణ్ణి సరోజినికి “త్యాగం” చేయాలి, మరి తాను “సాశీల్యం”లో కూడిన చాటామైన సమయమిచ్చి జీవితానికి అత్తి “త్యాగం” చేసుకోవాలి.

ఇంతకూ శరచ్చంద్రుడు వీరికాదా, ఏమిటి? కాదు, కనుమధ్యకి మీది సరిపెన్ను మనిపి. అక్రమము, అన్యాయము అనిపించిన ప్రతిదాన్ని ఖండించు తు, ఏవాహ చేశాడుగానీ, ఈ ఖండించ సెవ్వా అన్నీ గూడా, మోలెరిగిగానె క్రూరమైన సమాజానికిగల ప్రమాణాల చక్రం లోపలనే నిలిబాయి. సర్వసమగ్రమైన ధిక్కారాన్ని పరిచిన ఇంద్రాచూని సతమండి శరచ్చంద్రుడి పక్షాన అన్నదాదిదీ శ్రీకాంతుణ్ణి తిప్పించి కాపాడుతుంది. సర్వసమగ్రమైన అమోహానికి తానె హక్కుటానం. “సమగ్రత్తి”లోని కనుల సామాజికమైన ఏర్పాట్లను అతి తీవ్రంగా విమర్శిస్తుంది. ఏ సామాజిక పద్ధతికి అయినా మనోహ సాఖ్యం ఎక్కిజే గీటురాలు అంటుంది ఏమిటి సాఖ్యార్ని కొనసాగించేటటుకు, అతిశయింప చేసుకున్నా, సామాజిక జీవితాన్ని పునర్వ్యవస్థీకరించాలి అని వాదిస్తుంది. పెటోలం పెండెయ్, వాన్ని పూజించకు; గౌరవానికి యోగ్యమయింది ప్రాణ ప్రాణ పదార్థమే గానీ కారితవారిని మృతపదార్థము కాదు, చచ్చిపోయిన వానకొను అని ఎత్తికున్న దాన్ని ఎల్లెట్లకుమీ, అంటుంది. ఎవూ తెలిపయిన వాచం అనిపించవచ్చు గానీ ఇది మాటల గారడీయే. సమయమిచ్చుట దీం మీలమునుగు. దీం కామన పయికిరిమైన వైవిధ్యము వాగుంది. కనులవాచము ఈ వైవిధ్యములో అంశము. పట్టిమాలల కోప సరిపోయి అందుకే “శ్రీకాంత్”లో అభయ ప్రశ్నోత్తమవుతుంది, ప్యర్ సాపలాగ్న మించుదేదీ ఈ ప్రపంచకము మొత్తం మీదనే రెడు; పర్తికాంత్కి అడు పెచ్చెవార్ని చేస్తున్నా సరే పూర్తిచెయాలి. శరచ్చంద్రు డెంత “ఫార్వర్” కాగలడో అభయ అంత ఫార్వర్. ఏవాహా ఏవాచన పడుచుందో ఆయన చేసుచాన కుంతికి సరాకష అభయ. ఎవరోపచ్చి చేయూతనిచ్చి ఏవాచన కలుగి చేస్తే తాను ఏవాచన పొందిలేదు, తనకుతానె పాటుంది అభయకు చేసూరిని ఏవాచన పరిమ కిరణ్ణిమైన జీవితం మించి పెచ్చిందే గానీ, పుస్తకాల ముచో ఘరాజుల లోగిగిమందో పెచ్చిందేమీ కాదు. సమయమిచ్చి కేకలో వాచిలాగా పెచ్చిపోయే ఉద్రేక పిచ్చంపెచో, అప్పుతపిచ్చుకా జరిగే కోపతాప ప్రదర్శనో కాదిది. కామగింకనే వానపెచ్చు నెలకడి పొందిగలిగింది.

సాపత్రులు, అన్నదాలు, రాజ్యలక్ష్యాల తాము స్వయంగా పరిచిన సుగుణ మూలపక్షమే చూచుగా అభయ వైఖరి కోరికా రసపక్షం

చూపింది ఇంచుచే తనే ఆమెద్వారానే కీర్తనలు, కమల, కమలలక పరిపూర్ణత పొందుతున్నారు స్వేచ్ఛాపూర్వకము అయిన జీవితవరణమే అభయము తన జాతివారినుండి విడిగా నిలపగలుగుతున్నది ఇబ్బెన్ సృష్టించిన నోరా కంటే అభయ ఒక ఆంక్షెక్కువే చదివింది అభయ అనుభవించిన నజీవ రాసివాన్ని నోరా అనుభవించలేదు

కానీ కమలా ఆ స్త్రీల పరిమోచనను శిరిచ్చండ్రుడు ఎంతో దోహదం చేశాడు అని కొందరింటారు ఇది అతిశయోక్తి. కులము, వర్గమూ అనేక సందర్భాల్లో సమీకరించబడ్డాయి ఆ రెండూ ఒకటేననడం నబబుగాదు మహిళా పరిమోచన చారిత్రికంగా వరాయాకరణ (alienation) తో ముడిపడివుంది పరాయాకరణ అంటే అనుభవించబడ్డ మహిళా పరిమోచన సాధ్యము కాగలదు ఏకపక్షి పవాహపద్ధతి స్త్రీ జాతికి వరమని భ్రమకొల్పిన కామమూలం అంటే ఏకపు స్వామ్యము తోటి ఆ పద్ధతి వ్యాప్తిలోనికి రావడమే కాకకామ ముగైల్లు అన్నటుగా ఏకపక్షి పవాహము స్త్రీలపట్ల అమలు అయింది నెక్కు వ్యవహారాల్లో మగవాడికి స్వాతంత్ర్యము అయినా “తన” ఆధిపత్యం సాక్షిల్యం పడుతుంటే మహిళా మగవాడికి పట్టింపు ఈ ఏక పక్షత్వం, “వాతిపక్షత్వం” ఆపరిమోచనంతగా వెలికితలలు వేసింది. భార్య తన భర్తతోనూ జీవించడమే గానీ ‘మరిణిచాలి గూడా’ అన్న హక్కు ఉన్నదానికే తన పట్ల సౌతి అన్నీలో తానే భాగము అయిన స్త్రీ “పత్ని” అయ్యేందుకంటే ‘భార్య’ అయింది తనకు రక్షణ ప్రతిష్ఠ లాభించాయి గానీ ఆపరిమోచన మించు మతో తాను పోగొట్టుకుంది దానివేడు వ్యక్తిత్వం చరిత్రలో తొలి భాసిలయిన స్త్రీ ఇప్పటికీ ఆస్తికలోనే వుంది. కాబట్టి సౌతి అన్నీ మంచి సమాజమే ముటుపడకముందు మహిళా పరిమోచన సాధ్యంకాదు సమగ్రమైన సామాజిక దృక్పథము లేనందుకు శిరచ్చండ్రుడు పట్టిక ఉపైన్నాటాడు తన రచనలద్వారా ఆయన చేసింది న్యాయమే కాదు, దానిలో లోపాలుంటున్నాయి, అదే పదివేలు

శిరచ్చండ్రుని గానయే జాతీయతావాదము రహితమైన జాతీయతావాదాన్ని అయిన పరిమోచనాడు వాళ్ళాత్మ సంస్కృతిని స్వీకరించే పరిమోచన రహితమైన కోరికలు తాను భావించాడు చరిత్ర, భావీల ముఖ్యంగా అయిన గానయే మధ్య యుగితత్వాన్ని రహితమైన ఆమోదించలేదు శిరచ్చండ్రుడు అభిలషించింది మహాత్మాతో, గురుదేవుతో అభిలషించుట ఒకటిగాదు “స్వదేశీ” పేరిట భారతీయ ఆర్థిక జాతీయ వాదం జాతీయోద్యమం లోని ప్రధాన పర్గానికి ఉపకరించడము నరి అయిందే అని శిరచ్చండ్రుని భావం మించెట్లు స్థానాన్ని అహమ్మదాబాదు, పట్టిల్ల స్థానాన్ని జుమెట్‌పూర్ ఆక్రమించడము తనకు నమ్మకమే ఎవరి స్వయంగా చేసుకున్న పస్తావులు వారి అపసరాలను నరిగా తీర్చగలవు. ఎవరి అపసరాలు వారికే బాగా తెలుస్తాయి ఇందుచేత పదేళ్ళలనుండి యంత్రాల విగుమతని ఆపుచేసాలి అని శిరచ్చండ్రుడు అంటాడు ఏద్యుచ్చక్తి కూడా పట్టిమే సరి జాతీక పరిక్షణమైన ప్రతిభవుంటుంది ఆ ప్రతిభ పెంచి ఉత్పన్నమయిందే నలునుంది అయితే వాళ్ళాత్మ విజ్ఞాన కాస్తాన్ని తాను తీర్చుకుంటాడు కాకుంటే, దాని “భౌతికవాదం” తనకు ఆమోచి మోగ్యము కాలేదు మనిషికి ఆహారమే సమస్తమో కాదనీ మోటపరిగ్గు ఒప్పుకుందాము లక్ష్మిను మోతమే నమ్ముకుని జీవించగలరా? పేదరికం, అసదృశ్య, దుఃఖము—ఇవన్నీ ఉన్నాయంటే, ఉన్నాయి ఈ పరిమోచన సుస్థల వాతబడిన వారికి ఆర్థాత్మికవాదము మహా అయితే ఉండొంపు, మరి దిగజారితే నమ్మకం, ‘శేషపత్తి’లో కమల దీన్ని మునుగులాగి చూపుతుంది, “నెంసార త్యాగం, వైరాగ్యసాధన మాలక్ష్యం కాదు పరిపూర్ణ ప్రపంచ వ్యవస్థలతో, సుపూర్ణ సౌందర్యంతో పరి పూర్ణ జీవితం గడిపడమే మాలక్ష్యం ” ఒక వాక్రద్వారా ఈ మాటలుంటున్నది గ్రంథకర్త అయితే, అతని మొగ్గు ఒప్పుదో నృప్తమే అయినా తాను “వామపక్షిస్తుడు” కాదు కానీ మరేమిటి? తాను తానే తనది అంతర్యుద్ధము పాలె, సమాజంతో యుద్ధానికి తలపడిన మనస్సు మృత్యువు వాలయ్యే వాటికి తానుకా చాలోనూ తమములాడుకుంటా ఉన్నాడు. కాకే లేవనెత్తిన అంతులేని ప్రశ్నలకు సమాధానం కనిపెట్టే లోగానే చనిపోయాడు.

శిరచ్చండ్రు చటర్జీ జవాబులేని ప్రశ్న తానే ‘ఒక శేష ప్రశ్న.’

# Saratchandra :

## An estimate

K V Ramana Reddy

Coming closely on the heels of Rabindranath Tagore, Saratchandra Chatterji was naturally obliged to extricate himself both from the charisma and from the overpowering influence of the sage-poet and to blaze a trail of his own. This he succeeded in doing in no time and even beat the aristocrat litterateur in popularity, if not in prestige.

Rabindranath and Saratchandra present a splendid study in contrast in every respect—in birth and pedigree, in taste and outlook, and in conviction and philosophy. Rabindranath was an ethereal being in an unending pursuit of unalloyed love and blemishless beauty. His was a cloistered virtue. He could never manage to tread the earth however much he attempted to. Universalism was the stuff of which his literary material was woven into the very finest and transparent apparel too light for his men and women to put on, and so unreal too. Rabindranath peopled his pages with ideas, dreams, and aspirations all of which, whatever be their nobility and dignity, failed pathetically to partake of the real and the familiar. Empyrean—that is Rabindranath's 'Celestial' abode. In fine, he was the last flicker of the genius of his class—a class which was a gift of the company's Raj that lived off the fort of the land in Bengal and elsewhere during the one hundred and fifty years of its span. And to it we owed, in a large measure, our 'renaissance'. Exotic, if not downright alien, it superimposed its values on the mass of enslaved humanity that was British India, and those values soon were made to take on a homely colour owing to the reconciliation of the old and the new—a compromise which best suited the comprador nature of the class in question. Tradition and Modernity either were fused together or alternated, the one buttressing the other in a mutual give-and-take. The 'Hindu Mela' was, in the fitness of things, succeeded by Rabindranath's mystic modernism.

Saratchandra Chatterji was an intellectual offspring of a milieu which, on the face of it, was of an elitist character, much too narrow in its social grasp and far removed from life as it was actually lived by the country's own sons and daughters out in the villages and hamlets and in the slums and alleys. Saratchandra was only a suburb to Rabindranath's city, a Shibpur to a Calcutta, and his was, in fact and fiction, a typically 'petit bourgeois' universe. Incursions into it from the upper strata were few and far between, though its excursions into the upper and lower strata were necessarily not so. This explains much of its impetuosity and rebelliousness as

well as its ultimate acceptance of and acquiescence in the feudalist-bourgeois values circulating widely in school and market place, at home and outside. It was, in essence, a colonialist culture whatever be its public professions and private protestations.

There was certainly, a shade of difference in between Rabindranath's and Saratchandra's basic attitudes towards it, but it certainly was not a world of difference as it is made out to be. It is in this sense that Saratchandra may well be regarded not as a supplement to Rabindranath but a valid amendment. Neither was a social revolutionary in the true sense of the word, for the classes which are to accomplish the revolution were still waiting in the wings in their day as they are even now. That Saratchandra could not be a fullblooded revolutionary, inasmuch as he was a hesitant revolutionist, does not detract from his greatness. It only betokens the shortcomings natural to his class which, without the historic propulsion from the peasantry and the proletariat, is incapable of any independent revolutionary action, all by itself. It may at best chafe at the bit and rage at tradition; it may conduct forays, in the nature of adventurous essays, into the enemy territory too; it may rebel and riot and it may do much more without, however, digging into the foundations of the Bhut Bungalow which is the Hindu society. All these might be heroic but they are fated to end on a tragic note, for any amount of individualism cannot be a substitute for collective action of a conscious people. When awakened to their own power, they destroy only with a view to constructing.

That Saratchandra could so ably hold the mirror to these heroic, if also pathetic, travails of many a young man and woman, in seeking to break themselves loose from the stranglehold of custom and tradition, is itself no mean accomplishment as a writer. If he was not as much of a realist as Munshi Premchand, he was also not a romantic revivalist like Bankimchandra Chatterji. Was he a conservative, after all? Whether he was one such or not is a question that really matters.

Conservatism is not synonymous with reaction. A reactionary is one who swears by the past and consciously seeks to turn society back to its beginnings. A conservative is, on the other hand, discriminating enough to seek to keep intact that which, in his considered opinion, has stood the test of time in a society's life. Social mores are too firmly entrenched in social life to overturn in a moment of personal frustration or in a pique. A thoughtful consideration of the pros and cons ought, in a conservative's opinion, to precede every attempt to reform them, care should be taken not to lay violent hands upon its basic elements lest it loses its soul. Caution as much as circumspection are the twin mottos of true conservatism. Saratchandra was lacking only in these two and to label him a conservative does not, therefore, bring any credit either to conservatism or to him as a thinker and writer. He was only a cautious revolutionist for all his petulance and peevishness, and youthful waywardness, raw rebelliousness and defiance. But it bordered upon conservatism, as ill-luck would have it. He was a conservative revolutionist. A contradiction in terms? Yet it was so.

It is often claimed that Saratchandra Chatterji's traumatic experience of the life of Indian expatriates in Burma holds the key to his social attitudes. It might have shocked him out of his wits to see a virtual reversion to the Hobbesian State of Nature where no law reigned except the law of self, a self let loose from all inhibitions and invidious distinctions which has characterised life in the home country—caste, community, religion and what not. This was license, if it meant anything and it was to be shunned as much as bondage. In fact, bondage was the lesser evil, for it preserved at least the semblance of a community, well-knit or ill-knit, while license was destructive of the very liberty in whose name it spoke. Saratchandra was, in the end, drawn to this middle class virtue of a well-ordered domestic existence without falling into Victorian Prudery. He was the

rebel of a foredoomed cause, for all the escapades were storms in a teacup and they all staged a comeback, like the Prodigal son, to the feet of the mother, the harangues and the hurricanes not availing. One step forward and two steps backward, and all's well that ends well.

Take for instance, Kiraṇmayī in *Charitrahīn*. Vibrant with unquenched thirst for life, she was intelligent and buoyant, irrepressible and bubbling. All this must come to nothing and she must go out of her mind if only because the inscrutable person whom she had loved, Upēndra, was beyond her reach. Both had already been married, he to a doll and she to a living corpse. And even after he was widowed, he could not bring himself even to contemplate such a thing. His virtue had something of an inhumanity in it, and he was immune from extra-conjugal thoughts to a degree of insensitivity. Kiraṇmayī had to rage and rave, throwing overboard her unique rationality and good sense, all for the sake of this adamant figure. She had to accept defeat at the hands of a dullwit like Surabālā to whom the husband is verily the God and the *Purāṇa* the Gospel truth itself. Her unearthly beauty and her extraordinary intelligence unavailing, Kiraṇmayī was fated to be a blossom in the dust. Her rebellion against the values of the 'Bhadralok' society must not succeed, for she was destruction personified.

Or take Sābitrī in the same novel. Meek and mild, she is yet a muted rebel, a mummy as it were. She contracted no sooner than she expanded, a pitiful spectacle of a living death. She warmed to Satīś and only to Satīś, but failed to burst forth into flame even for Satīś. All this for the sake of a husband of whom she knew little or nothing. A tragedy which is as purposeless as it is incomprehensible. Sābitrī should be made to 'sacrifice' Satīś to Sarōjinī and 'sacrifice' herself to self-inflicted rigours of a 'virtuous' existence.

Was Saratchandra a coward, after all? No, he was just a believer in order, whatever it might denote. He did question and challenge every thing that was iniquitous and unjust, but these questions and challenges were all within the framework of the time-honoured norms of a basically cruel society. Annadādīdī of *Śrīkānta* speaks for Saratchandra to Śrīkānta whom she had rescued from Indranāth's fate of total defiance. She is herself an epitome of total compliance. Kamal in *Śēṣ Praśna* is orally a vehement critic of social arrangements and for her the touchstone of and the justification for any social move is man's happiness, to preserve and to promote which a reordering of social life might be called for. Give up the shell—she asks—and don't venerate it. What is really worthy of respect is not the fossil but an organism, so don't you sacrifice the living for the sake of the dead. Ingenuous as it may seem, Kamal's forensic skill cannot conceal behind its facade of sweet reasonableness the fearful contradiction of which it is but a part. Mere talk won't do and that is why there is Abhayā in *Śrīkānta*, a stormy petrel to whom nothing counts in the world as self-fulfilment. Anything and everything that comes in the way of personality must be swept aside. Abhayā is 'forward' as Saratchandra's 'forward' can be. She is the last word in his advocacy of women's liberation. Abhayā liberates herself rather than is liberated, and her liberation does not come out of books and salons. It comes from life in the raw. That is why it is so real and enduring—not just a passing phase of adolescent exuberance, nor a fitful exhibition of occasional ill-temper. Abhayā is positive in her stance and preference, while the Sābitrīs, Annadās and Rājlakṣmīs are only negative even in the virtue of their own choice. Kiraṇmayī, Kamal and Kamallatā find their completion in her. Free choice—that is the thing which marks her off from her compeers. She was more than Ibsen's Nora, for Nora did not go through life's hell as much as Abhayā did.

Saratchandra is said to have contributed much to the liberation of the high caste women. It is certainly an over-statement. Mere identification of caste with class leads nowhere, though they converge quite often. The liberation of women is historically bound up with the question of

alienation and it can come only when the latter is altogether eliminated. For monogamy proved to be a curse in the disguise of a blessing for the second sex, as its growth coincided with patriarchy. As Engels put it, monogamy was in practice meant only for the woman, man being free in matters of sex but at the same time very particular about the chastity of his woman. This unilaterality of it all was stretched to the degree of absurdity in the ideal of 'Patibratya', the wife living for the husband and dying with him too in times of yore. With no property rights of her own, and herself a living piece of her husband's private property, the wife became more of a *bharya* than a *patni*. She gained protection and prestige but lost much more—her dignity as an individual. Woman was history's first slave and she remains so, even today. Her liberation cannot be accomplished apart from the liberation of the society from private property. Saratchandra Chatterji cannot be taken to task for having failed to develop a comprehensive social outlook. The little that he did through his writings is indeed praiseworthy, despite its sentimentality and inconsistency.

A nationalist of the Gandhian School, Saratchandra found fault with Rabindranath's species of nationalism, for it allegedly called for the adoption of Western culture. Rabindranath himself had fallen foul of the medievalism of Gandhian philosophy with its emphasis on charkha and the homespun. What Saratchandra wanted was not what either the Mahatma or Gurudeb wanted. He transcended them both because he was conscious that Indian economic nationalism in the name of *swadeshi* was out to serve the interests of the dominant class in the nationalist movement, and rightly too. Manchester must give place to Ahmedabad and Sheffield to Jamshedpur, in his scheme of things, for only one's own handiwork would better answer one's needs if only because it better understands them. Saratchandra would, on this count, stop all imports of machines from abroad. Even electricity would be taboo. Only that which emanated from the genius unique to a nation would endure. But he does not have the heart to throw away Western science altogether, even though he takes it to task for its 'materialism'. Agreed that man does not live by bread alone. But can he live only on spirit? Poverty, ignorance, and misery are all there because they are there, and spiritualism might at its best be a comfort to those afflicted by these hallowed institutions, and at its worst a defence too. Kamal lays it bare in *Śeṣ Praśna*: "The renunciation of *sansara* and the attainment of disinterestedness are not our aim. Our aim and endeavour is to lead a full life endowed with an abundance of worldly goods and lit up by radiant beauty."

If it was the author himself who thus was speaking through a mouthpiece, there can be no doubt about his bent. But yet he was not a 'leftist' by any stretch of imagination. What was he then? He was his own self, at war with himself and with society. He was groping his way forward when death struck him down. He died even before he found an answer to the questions he had raised himself without end.

Saratchandra Chatterji was an unanswered question: a 'Śeṣ Praśna' in himself.

# గురువుని మించిన శిష్యుడు

గొట్టెపాటి వెంకటసుబ్బయ్య

“మొదటి శిష్యాపక్షానకు రాకొక చిత్తా ముద్దాన కెవల ఒకో చిత్తపుతో చిద్విరాదిన, ఎర్వవెక్షణ వలన అధిగంగా లభిస్తున్న అన్యార్థ మంతలుగారి మాట పట్టకొన్నాను అందుచేత తరిగి పక్షశాసిత దేరాను ఆసరికల ఒడి పడిచెట్టకుల ఎరుగలేదు అప్పుడు ఒక చంద్రుని నవలల సంగతి తెలిసెందు నవలా సాహిత్యములలో అందాన మరేదైనా ఇచ్చడా అనే సంకల్పం వాలో ఇంటిది నేను అదేమిగా చదవటం చేతి అది శిరస్థల అయినాయి ఒహూళా అది ఒక మేము ఏమి అభిమానికరిగడు చెయినాగాన, రిచనాద్వితీతో చూస్తే అది అంతా ప్యర్వమే కాన నాధానద్వితీతో చూస్తే అది అధిగ ప్రయాణం కలిగించుచున్న అపరంబున్నాను ”

“దానికి పిమ్మట ‘మంగమ్మనె’ పత్రిక దిర్భనుతో సమయం మారినపుడును రిచంద్రుని ‘చోఖేల వాల’ ( శిరటలో నలును ) అనే సవల అందులో పరునగా ప్రచురింపబడితూ పట్టంద భాష, రిచనా పథానల కూడా ఒక సూతిన రీతిన ఇంటి నెచ్చ అసంబంధింబి కంటికి కట్టెట్టగా యిదార్థంగా అంతి దాగా చిత్రలచంగల అనే నేను అంతకు ముందు కి “ననా తిలవలెను ఇంతి కాలానికి వాస్తవమైన సాహిత్యంతో వాడు, వాని స్వయంవరిచయం కూడా కలిగించుచున్న పుస్తకే స్వయం నాన కలుగుతుందనమూడు శిష్యుల కాదు ఈ కొది పుస్తకలో నాని ఇంతి అధిగ సంపది ప్రసాదించు అ చిహ్నమహుని శిక్షాక్షణ వెలతలచంగ భాష వానిలేదు ”

“ఇంతటి సుండి నేను సాహిత్యపండితుడు వానెత్తు ఒకప్పుడు నేను కూడా “రిచయిత” పన్న సంగతిచగూడా మరచితిని చిరకాల ప్రవాస మొనర్చితిని. ఈ ప్రవాస కాలమును పక్కానె వాస్తరా చె గాల్ ౧౯౯౩ ము సాధించున సంగతి సంగతి కూడా నాకు తెలియును వాని ఆయన సన్నిధిని కొచ్చుండి సాహిత్య సాధనకేము భాగ్యము పడలెను సరిగదా, సాధారణ ఎరిచయ భాగ్యమైనా కలుగలేదు. అయితే ఇది వాహ్య సత్యము మాత్రమే. నేనాయనకు యేకలవ్య శిష్యుడిను ఆయన కథలు, కావ్యములు, యితర పుస్తకములు కొన్ని పదేశములకు గూడా నా వెంట గొంపోతిని. నా చిత్రాంతి సమయములందెల్ల ఆ గ్రంథముల సనేకసాధ్న చవిపెత్తు. కాన, అందుల వాక్యపన్యాసము, భాష, కళ, వాడు, చేజి సంగతీ



నాకు పట్టలేదు. ఇంతకంటే పూర్ణిమైన నృప్తి యింక మరెవ్వరూ చేయజాలరని నా పరిమి విశ్వాసమై యుండెను కథలేమి, కావ్యములేమి, సాహిత్యములో నాకుగల మూలభూమిదేనని నా దృఢ నిష్కాంక్ష,”

“ఈ ప్రవాసమునందే నా యిష్టము గలిగి చివర ప్రాధాన్య ప్రవేశించింది. అప్పుడు నాకు అకస్మాత్తుగా ఒకనాడు సరస్వతీ సింజిక నాపై దృష్టులు పనిపెట్టినది. కానీ చేపాము అలసినది. శిర్షి ముందుగించినది మాతృభూమికి సుదూరమైన విదేశ వాసము. అయినను పుత్రాహము, దైత్యము నెప్పుడు పడువలేదు.”

“నా బాల్య యిష్టములు పూరించుటయందునే గతించిపోయినవి. నాకు భనాభావము పల్లవే పున్నతి విచారాభిము చేకూరిలేదు. చివరలెత్తము, సాహిత్యసృజనము ఇదే నా వైఖరినిపెత్తి. ఇంతకంటే నా తిండి నుండి నాకు సంక్రమించినదేమోలేదు. మొదటి గుణము వలన నా బాల్యకాలమునందే నాకు నెప్పుడు భారతదేశ నివాసము భాగ్యము కలిగినది. వైఖరిమైన రెండవ గుణము వలన జీవితమే ఒక స్వప్నముగా గడిచినది. నా తిండిగారి వాటిత్వముగాఁబడి. నాటకము, కవి, కావ్యము, మొదలైన సాహిత్యంగములన్నీటా ఆయనకు ప్రవేశమున్నది. కాని వాటిలో వేరినీ ఆయన పరిపూర్ణ చేయలేదు. ఈయన రచనలేవీ యిప్పుడు నావద్దలేవు. ఎక్కిత యిప్పుడు, యెట్లు పోయినది గూడా నాకుప్పుడు జ్ఞాపకములేదు. గిడులతరచి ఆ అనంపూర్ణ రచనలను చదివితూ గడిచినది మాత్రమే జ్ఞాపకమున్నది. యెందుకాయన అట్లు అనంపూర్ణగా పడిచాడో ఆలోచిస్తూ బాధపడేవాణ్ణి. దీని వెళ్ళా పూర్ణిచేమోలా అని రాత్రికు నిద్రలేకుండా ఆలోచించేవాణ్ణి. ఆ అనంపూర్ణమును పూర్ణము చేయుటకు మాత్రము నావల్ల కాలేదు. కాని యీ కారణం వల్లనే నాకు బాల్యమునందే అనిగా నా పడునారవ యేటనే కథలు వ్రాయు నిబాధము యేర్పడి పదవి చెప్పవచ్చును.”

శరత్బాబు పట్టెదన్నము కొరకు, పాట్ల చేతిపట్టుకొని పరిచేమైన బర్మాకు వెళ్ళెను. (1903-1917) వలకు 14గు సంపత్తిరములపాటు అక్కడే ఉన్నాడు. ఈ కాలాన్ని ఆయన జీవితములో అపరిమితముగాను కొంచెం రచయితలు. ఇది ఆలోచన లేని మాట.

ఆయన జన్మించినది దేవానందపురము. ఆయన రచన సాగించింది భాగల్పూరులో నైనా మూడవదగు జ్ఞానవేత్రిము పొంది శరచ్చంద్రుడు అనే సార్వకల పొందింది బర్మాలో.

కలకత్తాలోని ‘భారత పర్ష’ ప్రతికకు కథలు వ్రాయటం, వాటి ఆయనకు వెలకు సూచి రూపాయిలు ఇవ్వడం ఈ పరితుతో కలకత్తాలో కాలు పెట్టెను. వేరే ఉద్యోగం లేకుండా తన జీవిత పర్యంతము రచయితగానే ఉండిపోయాడు.

శరత్ రచనలకు గల క్లిమిడ్ చూస్తే ఆయన గొప్పతనము గోచరింపగలదు. ఆయన ‘పథేర్ పాత్’ (భారతి) ప్రచురించిన తొలిరోజునే మొదల ప్రతులు అమ్ముడైనవి. అప్పటికేకాదు ఇప్పటికీ కూడా ఈ మాదిరి ఏ గ్రంథము అమ్ముడుపోలేదు. దాని ప్రధమ ముద్రణ మూడువేల కాపీలు ఒక మాసములో అమ్ముడై పోయినవి. మరి ముద్రణ అయిచివేల కాపీలు మూడువేలలు ముగియకముందే ఖర్చు అయినవి.

దేశబంధు చిత్తరంజన్ దాసును ఎవరగని వాడుకను. ఆయన రాజకీయ నాయకుడేకాదు, భౌగోళిక, యోగి. ఆయన గొప్ప కవి కూడా. ‘సాగరి సంగీత్’ అనే ఆయన గ్రంథాన్ని గాంచిన వారికి ఆయన గొప్ప గోచరం కాగలదు. ‘నారాయణ’ అనే సాహిత్య పత్రికాధిపతి. ఆయన కోర్కెమీద శరత్బాబు ‘స్వామి’ కథను వుపాడు. ఆ కథను దాసు ఆచరణతో చదివి తన్నయిత్తై తిరుగు టపాలో ఒక బ్లాంక్ చెక్కును పంపించాడు. దానితోపాటు ఆయన వ్రాసిన ఉత్తరము కూడా పున్నది. అందులో ఆదేశ భక్తుడు ఇట్లా వ్రాశాడు. “మహాన్నతమైన ఒక రచయిత నుండి ఒక గొప్ప

కథను సంపాదించాను, దాని విలువకట్టే సాహసం వాకులేదు. అందుచేత ఈ ఖాళీ చెక్కును పెంపిస్తున్నాను. ఈ కథకు మీ ఇష్టం వచ్చినంత మొత్తాన్ని వేసుకొని మార్పుకొనవచ్చును.”

దేశబంధుదాను కేవలం పత్రికాధిపతి కాదు. ఆయన రెండుచేతుల సంపాదించిన పిఖ్యతి పోలు. శరత్బాబు ఎంత మొత్తమైనా వేసుకొనవచ్చును. కాని ఆయన తీసుకున్నది సూర్య రూపాయలు మాత్రమే. అది అనాటి ఆయన ప్రతిష్ఠ. ఇక పెక్కు సంగతులెందుకు ?

వంగీయులు యాపద్భారతానికి పెండ్లలు. అది పాశ్చాత్య ప్రభావముచే ముందు మేల్కొని యాపద్భారతానికి వెలుగుబాటు చూపించింది. సాంఘికముగా, రాజకీయముగా, సాహిత్యపరంగా, వారు మనకు మార్గదర్శకులు.

శ్రీ అరవిందయోగి యలాగు అన్నాడు— “పరిగభాష మనకు బంకిమచంద్ర ఉండెను, శ్రీ టాగూరు, శ్రీ శరత్చంద్ర ఉన్నారు. ఒక్క శతాబ్దానికి ఈ వన్నే చాలును.”

అరవిందుడు ఒంకిమచంద్రుని ముఠి అన్నాడు. ఆయన ‘మదేమాతరం’ ద్రవ్య. అది ఆయన “అనందమరం” నవలలో గాంచగలము.

ఆయన మనకు మాతృమూర్తిని ప్రత్యక్షము చేసాడు. పరిగభాష నవలకు వారపడి పెట్టింది ఆయనే. ఆయన మంచి రచయిత గాని గొప్ప రచయిత కాదు.

ఆయన ప్రభుత్వద్యోగిగా ఉండి తరువాత పెన్షన్ తీసుకొని కూడా రచనలు చేశాడు.

తరువాత ముచ్చగు రచీంద్రుడు. ఆయన కామినే చెప్పకొన్నాడు. “అలస్యముగా వచ్చిన కాళిదాసునని.” ఆయన సాహిత్య విభాగాలన్నిటా సంచరించాడు. దేశ విదేశాలలో సంచారము చేసి పిఖ్యతి చెందాడు. అంతర్ జాతీయ రచయిత అనునది ఆయనకే చెందుతుంది.

ఆ తరువాతి వచ్చాడు ఆయన శిష్యుడు శిరచ్ఛంద్రుడు. ఆయన పొందిన గౌరవము లేదు. మహిళలు కూడా ఆయనను గౌరవించారు.

రచీంద్రుని ‘చోఖేర్బాల్’ అనే నవల సంగతి మన్నాగదా. ఇందులోని వివోదినీ అనే పిల్లని ప్రణయకాంక్ష సానుభూతితో చిత్రించబడినది. నిషిద్ధప్రేమను సహజంగా పెరించిన ప్రభువు పరిగ రచయిత రచీంద్రుడే

గురుదేవుని అనుకరణను సమీధి ప్రణయార్థి సేపూడగా బ్రతింప సర్వజన హృదయాలను చూరగొన్నది శరత్బాబు ఒక్కడే

వేయేల ? పిళ్ళకపి రచీంద్రుడు శిరచ్ఛంద్రుని గురించి తెలివిన అభిప్రాయం గమనించుదాం.

“శరత్చంద్రుని దృష్టి మేగాలీల హృదయూతిరాగాల్లో మునిగితేలింది. నుఖంలో, దుఃఖములో, కలయికలో, ఎడబాటులో, మట్టిల్లకూ వుండేటువంటి విచిత్ర నృప్తిని ఆయన బెంగోలను కళ్ళకు కట్టినట్లుగా చిత్రించాడు. దీనికి నిదర్శనము వంగీయుల తరగని అనుభవమే. అంతరింగి కంగా పీరు ఆయన రచనలతో తృప్తిపడినట్లు మరే యితర రచయిత రచనలతోను తృప్తిపడిలేదు శరత్ కంటే గొప్ప ప్రతిభాపంతులు అధిక ప్రశంసలు పొందారు గాని, ఆయనవలె యిట్లా అందరి హృదయాధిపతియైన స్వీకరించిన వారు అరరు.”

అయివప్పటికిని శరత్ తత్వము కూడా గ్రహించటం మంచిదని యెంచి ఉదహరిస్తున్నాను గమనించండి.

శరత్బాబును కొంచెం వాస్తవికవాది అనీ, కొంచెం ఆచర్యవాదని, భిన్న భిన్న రీతులు పరస్పర విరుద్ధంగా వారి వారి చిత్త సంస్కారాన్ని అనుసరించి, పలుపును పలువిధములుగా తమ ఆభిప్రాయాలు వెల్లడించారు. ద్రష్టను బట్టి దృశ్యముంటుంది. ( as he is, so he sees ) వాస్తవమునకు ఆయనను గురించి సాంగోపాంగముగా ఆలోచించినవారిండు.

ఆయనకు ప్రకృతియందు ఎంత అనురాగమో, పతిత ప్రాకృత జనులయందంత అభిమానం. పరంపరాగత సాంఘిక దృక్పథమును ఆయన పాటించలేదు. ఒక నివ్య దృక్పథంతో ఆయన ఏర్పించి, జీవితపు సూతిన పలుపలు ఏర్పరచెను.

ఆయన ఒక నివ్య జగత్తుకు సంబంధించిన దేవదూత. కృత్రిమ ఫిర్యములను కూలద్రోసి మానవ ధర్మమును మహిమి వెలకొల్పిన మానవతా ప్రథమ ఋషి.

శిశు శతాబ్దాల నుండి, భేద దృష్టితో చూస్తున్న మానవులలో ఒక సూతిన దృక్పథాన్ని తెచ్చిన మానవతావాది శరత్బాబు.

ఆత్మ విస్మృత మానవ జాతిలో మానవత్వ కోడించిన మహానీయుడాయిన. ఆయన గొప్ప విప్లవకారి. ప్రపంచమందలి యువజన లోకం మనీషవర్గం ఈ విప్లవాన్ని అంగీకరిస్తున్నది.

మానవుడు మానవునికి చేస్తున్న అపచారాన్ని అరికట్టుటకు, కంపిత హృదయంతో, కరుణా సాగరుడై, శరత్ స్వీయ రచనలన్నిటా ఈ మంత్రాన్నే పఠించాడు.

ఉన్నతాధర్మములకై కృషిచేసే శరత్బాబుకు సంఘ దృక్పథములో దుచ్చరిత్రులుగా ఉన్నవారియెడ అపార అనురాగం. ఆయనకు హర్షం అట్టివారెవరికి సాహిత్యముండు ప్రాణములేదు. వాటి పరంపరాగతి సంప్రదాయకులకూ, విలాసప్రియులకు, ప్రాణమిచ్చారు. అదర్శ వాస్తవిక వాదములు రెండూలేవు. ఉన్నది ధన స్వామ్యవాదమే. సూతన మనోవైజ్ఞానిక దృష్టితో, శరత్ వ్యక్తుల ప్రవర్తనకు నజీవ వ్యక్తిత్వాన్ని కలుగ జేశాడు.

ఆరూఢ ఆదర్శ వాస్తవికవాదాలను త్రోసిపుచ్చి ఆయన మానవ వాదాన్ని వెలకొల్పాడు.

దేనిని సంఘం చెడు అంటుందో, అది సాంఘిక పరిస్థితుల వల్లనే కలిగింది. ఆకలిగొన్నవాడు తినరాని తిండిని తినునట్లు, సంఘ వివశుడు, విరోధాయుడై శారీరక అనాచారములను చేయుటకు సిద్ధపడును. అతడు క్షమాహుడు. శరీరము చిక్కతమైనా అట్టివాని మనస్సు ఏకార రహితంగానే ఉంటుంది. పంకములో పంకజమువలె శారీరక బలహీనతలో గూడా అతడు శోభించును. కుమ్మరి పురుగు పంటివాడు బురదలో పడినా అతనికి బురద అంటదు. అనలతడు పంకిలము కానివ్వడు. శరత్ పాత్రల్లో దేవదాసు, నక్స్, శ్రీకాంతులె ఇందుకు నిదర్శనము. అంతః శుద్ధిలేనివారికే పంకిలమంటేది. సంఘము దోషరహితము కానంత వరకు మనో శారీరక స్వాస్థ్యముల ఏకీకరణ మసాధ్యము

సంఘము శారీరక పవిత్రతనే గుణమంటుంది. కాని ఇది శీలమునకు ఆధికమైన స్థూలరూపము. శారీరక గుణదోషాలను, వైద్యుడు కను కొనగలడు. కళాకారుడు అంతకంటే వైమెట్టుకు అరుదెంచి మానసిక చరిత్రను చూడగలడు. ఈ చూపులో ప్రకృతి, కవి, భూగోళపు మాష్టరు

భిన్నులైనట్లు, కవి, వైద్యుడు గూడా భిన్నులు. చరిత్ర అనే మాటను శరత్చంద్రుడు మనోనిర్మాణ దృష్టితో చూచాడు. ఈ దృక్పథంతో గృహదేవత లలో నెద్దుద్దిన, యువకులలో జాగృత్యాన్ని, సాంఘిక దురాచారాలలో ముప్పుద్దిన చూపెట్టాడు.

శరత్ మానవత్వం అంతఃకరణ సంకలనం : మానవుని పక్షిమండలం అంతర్లభ్యమే అయిన ఒకమీడియా. అందువల్ల బాహ్య దర్శన నిష్ప్రయోజనమైంది.

నంపుం మానవత్వమున్నట్లు ఆవిష్కరించుతో నుంచున్నది. కానీ, మానవసాధనములను అపరాధం, క్రాంతి, సామూహికతలను కోల్పో యుందిని ఆయన వ్యంగ్యంగా అన్నాడు.

సాంఘిక నీతి నియమాలు పనికి సామ్యమౌనకి చెందిన ఫలకవాదం ఫలార్థి నిరసనతో, సంఘాన్ని కూడా ముగించి. ఫలం మీదనే మానవుని సహజ అమూల్యం ఆధారపడినట్లుండే, సహచారి మరణాచారముల ఫలంపై ఈ ఫలకవాదం ఒక వైపున పివాహా సంస్కృతి, మరొక వైపున వేశ్యలను సృష్టించింది. ఈ వర్గం నీతి నియమాలను అభివృద్ధి చేసే వారు సంఘ ముహూర్తాన్ని చరిత్ర హీనులనుచేరి. న్యాయంగా వారు చరిత్ర హీనులుకాదు, సచ్చరిత్రులు. ఆ సచ్చరిత్రులు ఈ నీతికి ఎలా అనుగుణ్యులు.

శ్రీ అబల. సృష్టికి ఆమె నిస్సహాయ సాఫల్య మార్గము. పవాహితైరా, అపవాహితైరా, నిస్తీర్ణభావించే ఆమె విభవమలె ప్రసిద్ధిపాలనని సేదే. అందుచే చైతన్యముగల ముపతులు ఈ వర్గం సంఘంపై తిరుగువాడు చేస్తున్నాడు. శరత్ విప్లవ వాత్రిల్లోని కమల ఈ శ్రేణికి చెందినదే.

నంపుం నంప్రదాయానికితో సహాచారి మరణాచారములను పర్వాలు చేసింది శరత్చంద్రుడు దానికి సూత్రం వ్యాఖ్యచేశాడు. కవి వ్యాఖ్యనా సంబంధమైన కఠిన నియమములను అతిక్రమించునట్లు, శరత్ సాంఘిక ఆవిష్కరణములను ఈర్ష్యించి మానవుని మంచి పిముక్కుణ్ణి చేసెను.

శేషప్రశ్నలో ప్రాజీన వైతికావస్థలన్నింటినీ ఖండించినట్లే, అర్థిక పరిస్థితులన్నింటినీ సామ్యవాదివలె ఆయన ఖండించగలడు. కాని ఆయన మహాత్ముని వంటి వైతికవాది కాదు. పీఠప్రసవలె సాంప్రద్యపాంసెడు కాదు. మార్క్సిస్టులంటి అర్థిక సూత్రికాడుడు కాదు. ఆయన సాంఘిక సామ్య వాది. సాంఘికంగా శ్రీలకు జరిగే అన్యాయాలను సవరించుటకు ఆయన ధ్యేయం. ఆయనలో విప్లవతత్వముధికిం. ఆవిప్లవ శివత్వం కొరకు (లోక కళ్యాణం కొరకు).

మానసిక దాస్య విమోచనం కొరకు ఆయన అచరిత కృషి చేసినట్లు.

శరత్ను గురించి ఒక్క మాటలో చెప్పవలసి వస్తే ఆయన మానవతావాది. ఈ మానవవాదం శేషప్రశ్నలో పూర్తిగా వ్యక్తమైంది. ఇంకాను పూర్వం ఆయన మానవవాదం శ్రద్ధాస్వతి సూక్ష్మ పార్శ్వముచే ఆవేర్చితమై పుండెను. శేషప్రశ్నముందీ మునుగు తొలగింపు జరిగింది. ఇందులో శరత్ లోకక జీవన దార్శనికుడయ్యెను.

సమన్య లన్నిటిలోను శ్రీ సమన్య ముఖ్యమైంది. పురుషుడి సమన్యను సాంఘిక దృక్పథంతో గాక, స్యార్ల దృష్టితో చూచెను. సంఘములే శ్రీ పురుషులు కాని కేవలం పురుషులు మాత్రమే కాదు. కామినీ కాంచనములు విడిచి గారి మోక్షము రాదన్నారు. అనగా శ్రీకి మోక్షము అవసరము లేదన్నమాట. అతని దృష్టిలో శ్రీ ఒక భోగ వస్తువు. ఆమెను కాంచనముతో పాటు ఒక ఖనిజముగా భావించాడు. ఫలాన్ని ఖజానాలో

పందినట్లే, శ్రీని అంతఃపురములో బందించాడు.

శ్రీ పురుషులు నిరసించారు. తమ అంతఃకరణముల గల మానవులు. ఈ సంబంధం మానవ మానవి. వారి వ్యక్తిత్వములోనే పాంథిక కళ్యాణము గలదు.

శ్రీ పురుష సాయుజ్యములోనే జీవనపూర్తి సంస్కృతి వున్నది. శివుడు కేవలం పురుషుడు కాదు. అర్థనారీశ్వరుడు. లోక సంగ్రహార్థమై పురుషుని హుషం, శ్రీ బాహ్యముల కలయికయే అర్థనారీశ్వరత్వం. బాహ్యం లేని మానవుడు జరుగు. శ్రీయే స్వీయ వ్యక్తిత్వము వలన దానిని సజీవమునెట్లు పర్యటి నిర్ధారి శివుని పాఠ్యుని. నేటి సర్వ సమస్యలకు మూలమైన శ్రీ సమస్య ప్రచున్నముగా వున్నది. ఈ సమస్య ఒక విధంగా పరిశీలించి వ్యక్తిత్వంగా, మానవుని సంకేతం. శ్రీ చైతన్య రహిత గనుక పురుష జాతి కేవలం ఇంద్రియ సభ్యకా జాలెనది. అందుచేత పురుషుడు పరిపూర్ణుడు. స్త్రీ దాతృత్వమును పెట్టి అతడు మానవుడు కాలేకపోయాడు. పాశ్చాత్య ఆహంకారమే పురుషులను సేసింది. ఈ ఆహంకారమే ఆమెను జడనంపిస్తూ భావించుచుంటుంది. అతడు సాంఘిక ప్రాణిగా గాక, అడవిపురుగుమై పోయాడు. తాను మనహా అందరూ భక్త్యోప జీవులుగా భావించాడు. పురుషుని భక్త్యనీతి వల్లనే అతని ఇతిహాసిక సద్భుత భోగ ప్రధానమైనది. స్త్రీ ఉద్ధరణ వల్లనే అతనికి స్వీయ అహంకార క్షయం నశించి కలదు.

శరత్సాహిత్యమునకా వరామర్శించిన ఒక విమర్శకునకు దానిలో ఏడు టన్నుల పాదధూళి, పది టన్నుల కన్నీరు మాత్రమే కనపడినది.

మరొక మహానుభావునికు యిది ప్రయోజన రహితముగా గోచరించింది. ఇంకొకరికి యిందులో అవినీతి ప్రచారము, అస్వభావికత సంచలన విద్రోహం నిరాశావాదము కన్పడినది.

మన వివాహ సంస్థలోని లోపాలు, బాలవిశంతుల కష్టస్థాయి, ఈటా జోటాలేని భార్యాభర్తల సంసార కష్టాలు, భగ్నజీవుల చరిత్ర, శరత్ చిత్రించాడని ఆశకులు సాధారణంగా భావిస్తారు.

కాని పీటి వెనుకనున్న పాప మానవత్వమును, విశ్వజనీనితను, గ్రహించ గలిగింపవాడు అల్పసంఖ్యాకులే. ఈ అద్భుతగుణమే లేనిచో అశేష జనాకర్షణ జరుగదు.

అంతర్లప్తీతో మానవ చరిత్రను రచించిన మహానుభావుడు శరచ్చంద్రుడు. పంగేడు అంతర్లోకపు ఋషి.

ఆయన చంద్రోద్భవమైన కవిత్యం చెప్పకపోయినా, ఆయన గొప్పకవి. మానవ నిగూఢి గోపని వేదనను వెల్లడించిన మహాకవి.

సంఘశోభిత జీవితగాధలను, కన్నీరు మున్నీరగునట్లు వర్ణించిన వర్ణ చిత్రకారుడు.

అవమానితుల వేదనలను, హాహాకారాలను, అశ్రువులను, వాషాణాలు సహితము ద్రవీభూతమగునట్లు చిత్రించిన కరుణాకాతర కథకుడు.

ఆర్థుల ఆక్రందనానికి అక్షర రూప మిచ్చిన అమర కళాకారుడు.

మూకవ్యధా వేదనను మధుర పాపిత్యంగా నృప్తించిన మధుర మూర్తి.

అనంబద్ధ విధి నిషేధాలతో బాధపడుతున్న మానవ జీవితాన్ని అపూర్వ సానుభూతితో హృదయ నిర్మల హిత మొందిన దయాసాగరుడు.

మానవచరిత్ర ద్రవ్య, జీవితాన్ని యధాతథంగా చిత్రించిన చిత్రకారుడు. జీవిత హాసాలనుండి అపమృతపు సోనలు కురిపించిన అపర భవభూతి.

అయన హృదయ విసర్గిత ముగిసేదే అయన రచనల నిర్వహణ సమాధిరకములైనవి. ఆ కవిగా హృదయమని అంతరంగిక స్వరాను లావమే మనలను ముగ్ధులను చేస్తుంది. అయినంటే అధిక నిపుణ రచయితలైనా. కానీ ఈ ఆక్కిమితను అన్యతా గాంచు. అయిన రచన లన్నిటా ఆయన అస్థిత్వం గర్భితమై యున్నవి.

కేవలం బాహ్య సంఘటనలను మాత్రమే పరిస్కరించుకొని, అందరి హృదయ స్వరూపాలను నిర్ణయించరాకేదే అయిన చేదాంతం.

పాతీత్రత్యం సాంఘిక ఆచారము కాదు. నిష్ఠ శ్రీ పట్నం. అ పట్న ప్తచో పివాహము వెళివానా సాంఘిక భద్రతకు భంగం రాదని ఆయన ఆశ్చర్యము.

మానవుడు అల్పుడు కాదు. అపకాశములే అధికులు కాగలరని అయిన నిరూపం.

దేహము కంటే ప్రేమ, నిరంకుశ కంటే వ్యక్త కళ్యాణము అధికమని అయిన చాటాడు.

మించదెడ్డలు ప్రతివాసలోనూ పుడునని, చెడును త్యజించి, ముందు నిర్వహించవలసినది అది మానవుని మానవత్వమునుండి దైవత్వ మునకు తీసుకొని పోగలదని అయిన చాటాడు.

మానవ మరణానికి కాదు నేను పిచారించేది, మానవత్వ మరణానికి అని అర్థమైన మానవత్వాదాది.

అసెడిలు, అబలులకై పోరాడిన సాంఘిక స్వాతంత్ర్యం.

జాత్యహంకారాన్ని నాశనంచేసి నిర్విమాన సామ్రాజ్యత్వాన్ని, కామగ్రహ సామ్రాజ్యం, ప్రేమసంఘనాన్ని, సోపరి మానవత్వం స్వీయ రచనల ద్వారా ప్రబోధించిన మహావ్రవక్త శిరచ్ఛంఘము.

మానవతకు పట్టాభిషేకం కట్టడమే అయిన పరిమాపి.

ప్రేమ, మానవత అవసరమని అక్షర దాసుగా సూరిపోసిన అక్షరశిల్పి.

# Saratchandra :

## An evaluation

G V Subbaya

"The teacher, in his gracious benevolence, had given me the cue—education that is confined to the school is not real. True education is the outcome of wide travel after school. I followed this advice, and returned to the town, but did not leave the school till I completed the course. There I learnt of Bankimchandra's novels. I never even suspected that there could be any literature outside Bankimchandra. By reading his novels over and over again I got them by heart. Perhaps this is a mistake. I began to follow him blindly. Considered from a literary angle, all that was sheer waste ; but considered from the angle of practice, it proved very profitable for me.

"After this, my contact with the journal 'Banga-Darshan' inaugurated a new era for me. Rabindranath's *Chôkhôr Bâli* began to be serialised in this journal. The language and style were of a new order, and I felt very happy. I never even dreamt that an author could delineate reality so picturesquely. After such a long time, I had the taste of realistic literature. The saying that 'the more you read, the wiser you become' is not true. I have not the language to express my gratitude to that great master who gave me an invaluable treasure in those few pages.

"Thereafter I lost connection with literature. On many occasions I even forgot that I too was a writer. I was a wanderer. During this period I was not even aware of the Bengali literature's progress wrought by the achievements of the 'Biswakabi'. I had not had the good fortune of acquaintance with him, nor had I the fortune of having lessons in literature from him. This is the truth. But I have been an 'Ekalabya'.<sup>1</sup> I even carried his stories, poems and other publications abroad. I read those books several times, but I could not pick up his mastery in the majesty of his language and expressions. I had the deep conviction in mind that there could not be any creation more complete than this. I strongly feel that his works became my literary stock-in-trade.

"I spent my youth in wandering. The body was tired, energy had diminished ; though I was staying abroad, far off from the motherland, enthusiasm and strength still had not left me.

A disciple in absentia,

"My childhood and youth were passed in great poverty. Consequently, I had not had higher education. From my father I inherited his restless spirit and his keen interest in literature. I had not inherited anything else. The former made a tramp of me and I toured the whole of India even in childhood. The latter turned me a long dreamer. Unfathomable was the depth of my father's knowledge. He had tried his hand in drama, story, poetry, etc., but never could he complete anything. I do not have any of his writings. I do not even remember how, when and where I had lost them. I remember how I had spent hours together reading those incomplete works. I felt sorry for he had not completed them and I used to think of completing them. But I could never complete them. Probably this led to my writing short stories when I was merely seventeen." So said Saratchandra about his childhood and beginning of his literary career.

For a morsel of food Saratchandra had to flee his own country and go to Burma. For fourteen years (1903-1917) he remained there. This period was described by some critics as as the 'dark period' in his life; but this description is either hasty or thoughtless.

He was born at Debanandapur (in the district of Hooghly in West Bengal); he started his writings in Bhagalpur; but it was in Burma that he developed his third (inner) eye which justified his name Saratchandra—'the moon of Autumn'.

He returned to Calcutta as a story-writer for the journal 'Bharatbarsa' on a monthly remuneration of a hundred rupees and all through his life he remained a writer.

His greatness can be measured by the demand for his books. On the very first day of the publication of his novel *Pathēr Dāhī* a thousand copies were sold out. Not only then, but even now no such phenomenal demand is heard of in our country. The first print of three thousand copies was sold out in a month and the second print of five thousand copies was sold out in three months.

There is hardly an Indian who has not heard of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. He was not only a great political leader, but was a *Bhogi*, *Tyagi* and *Yogi* (accustomed to luxurious living, but, at the same time, capable of renouncing his all when required, and a sage unswayed by his environment). He was also a writer of eminence—he wrote the *Sāgar Saṅgī* and he was also the editor of the literary journal 'Narayan'. At his request Saratchandra sent him a story *Swāmī*. Highly pleased with this story, he sent a blank cheque by return post along with a letter stating: "I have got a great story from a highly eminent author; I dare not evaluate its worth. So I send you this blank cheque which may please be drawn for any amount you wish." Deshbandhu was not merely the owner of a journal; he was the most eminent lawyer of his day in Bengal, earning fabulous fees. But Saratchandra took only one hundred rupees.

Bengalis are the most respected amongst Indians. They have risen to this height by assimilating the Western culture and showing the illuminated path to others. Socially, politically and culturally, they are our trail blazers.

Sri Aurobindo once said: "As for Bengali, we have had Bankim and still have Tagore and Saratchandra. That is an achievement enough for a single century." Sri Aurobindo called Bankimchandra a 'risi'. Bankimchandra had composed the noble national song 'Bande Mataram' (*Ānandamath*). He brought 'Mother India' before our eyes. It was he who had developed Novel into its present form. He was a good writer, but not a great one. He wrote even after he retired from Government service.

After him came Rabindranath, who wrote of himself as 'Kalidasa, arrived late'. He trod every branch of literature, visited foreign countries and became famous as an 'International Poet'. Then came his disciple Saratchandra. There was no honour that was not heaped on him. Even the world of women honoured him.



All of us have read Tagore's novel *Chôkhêr Bâli*. The desire for marital happiness of the widow Binôdini in this novel has been delineated with extreme sympathy. Tagore was the first writer who so naturally portrayed 'forbidden love'. After Gurudeb ( Tagore ) it was only Saratchandra who developed this theme with subtle and skilful artistry and captured the heart of Bengal and the world. No more need be said than quoting from Tagore's appraisal of Saratchandra : "Saratchandra focussed his attention into the depths of human heart—of happiness and sorrow, at meetings and partings, he presented us an unexpected picture of artistry and nuance. The proof of this is the never ending pleasure of the Bengalis in his writings. With no other writer have they felt such deep inner satisfaction as with Saratchandra. Others have won more fame by their meritorious works, but few have attained such mastery over the hearts of his readers."

Nevertheless, it is necessary to understand the philosophy of Saratchandra. I discuss here a few points. Some consider Saratchandra as a pragmatist, and some consider him as an idealist—the differences and contradictions depending upon their own culture and, understanding, as the proverb goes, 'as he is, so he sees'. But very rarely we come across critics who have studied him deeply and thoroughly. He appreciates nature and he bestows the same appreciation on the unfortunate who have either fallen morally, or have sinned against society and been cast out. He does not blindly follow the old traditions and inhibitions of society, and brings to bear on every one of the social issues an entirely new and original outlook and lays down his own moral values.

He is the divine herald of a new social order. Rooting out the artificial and outmoded social customs and values, he established his own human and humane values. Into the hearts of people following centuries-old traditions which in some cases had resulted in pain and anguish to the poor, the weak and the down-trodden, he brought a new vision by his mercilessly realistic portrayal.

He was the great humanist who helped people to regain the souls they had lost by adhering to effete traditions. He was a great revolutionary, and the elite of the youth of India have accepted his revolutionary tenets.

Shocked and moved by the ignominy and travail of the down-trodden and the socially ostracized, this deeply sympathetic sage made a supreme effort to stem the tide of injustice masquerading as social tradition by preaching his ideals of humanism.

Inspired by high idealism, Saratchandra developed an inordinate sympathy for the victims of social injustice. No earlier Indian author ever handled such causes in literature. They were hide-bound by tradition, and wrote only of the rich, the powerful, the pleasure-loving and the heroic. Idealism and pragmatism did not find much of a place in their writings, only money and the moneyed found. By dint of his insight into the hearts of common man, he instilled vibrant individualism into his characters. Casting aside blind idealism, he established humanism.

Whatever has been conventionalised as 'bad' by society has been only the off-shoot of social circumstances. Just as a hungry man eats even inedible food, a social outcast, bereft of any remedial measures, is prepared to subject his body to indignified brutalities. Such a man is worthy of forgiveness. Even though his body becomes impure his mind remains free of taint. Just as the lotus is pure and lovely despite its birth in mud, even so the outcast shines in his weaknesses. Like an earth insect that is born out of mud but remains free from mud, he would never allow his mind to be soiled. The characters of Dēbdās, Satīś and Śrīkānta are examples. It is only those that are impure in mind that are soiled by mud. Until society rids itself of its ghastly mistakes, the unification of body and mind of the individual cannot be ensured.

Society considers only bodily purity as virtue ; but this is an incorrect and superficial

idea. The doctor can see bodily ailments; the literary artist can go further and visualise mental ailments. Just as the Geography teacher and the nature-lover differ, so do the poet and the doctor. Saratchandra looked at history with the object of mental transformation. It is from this angle that he delineated the noble aims and the high ideals among the youth, and pinpointed the outcome of misused conventions.

The humanism of Saratchandra moves the heart; man can be saved only by the realisation of his inner light, and so the gross materialistic picture is rendered useless.

"Society moves with all the paraphernalia and fanfare as if it had been endowed with humanism, but it has lost the basic roots of understanding, sacrificing spirit and sympathy" said Saratchandra in a paradoxical vein.

Social customs and practices belong to the rich. Just as the philosophy of money devours money, so it has devoured 'society'. If man's basic values were to depend on money, all the conventions, both good and bad, belong to the rich. It is this stratum of the rich that had created the systems of marriage alongside that of harlotry--such of the individuals as have transgressed these conventions have been cast out of society and been called immoral ('Charitrahin'). In reality they are being victimised by society.

Woman is a weakling. Married or unmarried, she has to drown herself in her own tears like a widow. It is because of this that cultured ladies are revolting against this barbarous tyranny. The character of the revolutionary Kamal belongs to this category.

The 'do's' and 'don't's' have been laid down by society with a view to establishing traditions which make living easy within the social framework. He gave them a new dimension. Just as the true poet transgresses the norms of grammar to emphasise his new point, so also Saratchandra transgressed the norms of society to grant a new charter of freedom to the individual.

Just as he had disapproved and disproved the undesirable traditions of the older society, so also he could have disproved the economic order like a socialist, but he was not a moralist of Gandhiji's type. He was not a worshipper of beauty like Tagore, nor was he an economist of the type of Marx. His chief object was to bring to the fore the terrible injustices to the women of society. His revolutionary fervour was intense but it was not for the betterment of the world as a whole.

He carried on an unceasing fight against the shackles imposed by society. In one word, he was an intense humanist. This humanism is dominant in *Śēṣ Praśna*. Before he wrote this book, he was only alluding to injustices to womanhood, but in this book he openly took cudgels against the issues. Here Saratchandra pioneered a new social order.

Of all the problems, those relating to women are more important. Men usually view these problems not from the social angle but from their own individual selfish angle. Society is not made up of men only, but of both men and women. It is said that to attain salvation, one must give up both money and women. This implies that women do not need salvation. In the eyes of man, woman is only an object of enjoyment. Along with gold, she is only meant for decoration. Just as he secretes gold, he secreted women in his dwelling or palace.

Men and women are not merely flesh and blood; they are beings with souls of their own. In the recognition of their separate entities lies the welfare of society.

It is only in the reciprocity between man and woman that life attains its full culture. Lord Siva is not merely a male; he is half-female. For the well-being of the world, the virility of man must be conjoined to the forbearance and resilience of woman; this is the secret of 'Ardha-Narīswara'-- the Lord who is half woman. Man without understanding and

forbearance is inanimate. It is only woman, who by her own individuality, makes man a live being. The basic issue—the proper appreciation of women—deters man from becoming a beast ; it is the insignia of humanism. Since woman is not inherently dynamic, man has become a creature of passions and desires, and he degenerates into a beast, using woman as an instrument, and cannot attain manhood. Beastly masculinity thus became the order, and this is what led to the evaluation of woman as a plaything. Instead of being a noble member of society, he became a wild savage. It is this line of thought that led to the social morality of unrestrained enjoyment. It is only by elevating woman that he can get rid of his mean and arrogant selfishness.

One critic who had delved deep into Saratchandra's literature said that he could find only seven tons of dust of bare feet ('pada dhuli') mixed with ten tons of tears. To another great critic this literature seemed futile ; yet another found it propagating immorality and unnatural pessimism of social traitors.

The general impression is that Saratchandra brought out picturesquely the defects in our marriage customs, the distress of young widows and the harshness of the married life of incompatible couples ; but it is very few that understand the humanism and the universality at the back of this delineation. Without this magnificent ability he could not have been the recipient of the love and respect of countless readers.

He is the great artist who portrayed, with rare insight, the play of emotions in human progress. He is the exponent of the inner conflicts in the Bengali society of his time.

Even though he did not conform to the straight-laced conventions of literary effort, he was the supreme artist who brought into the open the hidden, unspeakable inner trials and tribulations of man and woman. His colourful pictures of the lives of people, castigated and spurned by society, have evoked our pity and protest.

He was the champion of the socially outcast and downtrodden mutes, whose sufferings, anguish, and lacerated hearts he so sympathetically turned into mellifluous literature that touched the heartstrings of his readers.

He was a fine realist in depicting human nature and actions in their correct perspective. He converted the 'gall' of their sufferings into the 'manna' of literature by his extremely delicate and sympathetic handling.

His artistry mesmerises us and fills us with admiration. There are authors who are more skilled than he, but the fine sympathy with which he treats his subject is rarely found elsewhere.

The physical chastity of woman is not a social convention ; it is her own training and discipline. If this discipline were to exist even in the unmarried, the security of society will not be affected—this is his conviction.

Man is not a weakling ; if an opportunity were to present itself, he can rise to great heights—this is his message.

Love is greater than the body and the individual nobler than society—this is his proclamation.

Good and bad are both inherent in every individual ; casting out the bad and developing the good would lead man from humanism to Divinity—this is his theme.

"I do not grieve for the death of man ; I grieve only for the death of humanism in man", thus cries out Saratchandra.

He was the social Knight-at-arms who fought against the social injustices on the women and the weak.

By his great writings he tried to demolish the prejudices of caste, to establish universal brotherhood and to propagate the basic human values of sympathy, understanding, and love.

He was the sculptor of letters who, by his literature, established the importance of love and humanism.

*Translated by J. V. L. Narasimham*



# سرت چندر چٹرجی

محمد حسن

ٹیگور اور نذر الاسلام کے بعد سرت چٹرجی اردو دنیا میں بنگال کے مقبول ترین مصنف ہیں ان کے متعدد ناول اردو میں ترجمہ ہو کر مقبول ہوئے اور اتنے مشہور اور مقبول ہوئے کہ انہوں نے اردو کے اخلاقی ادب کو متاثر کیا اور ہمارے سماجی رویوں پر اثر ڈالا۔ آج کے نوجوان جذباتیت کی افراط پسند نہیں کرتے اور کھوئے کھوئے سے خواب پرست کرداروں کے قائل نہیں انہیں ان کہانیوں میں اور ان کے کرداروں میں ایک غیر حقیقی انداز نظر آتا ہے۔ بڑھتے ہوئے آئیڈیل ازم اور تصور پرستی کا عکس دکھائی دیتا ہے لیکن حقیقت یہ ہے کہ اس قسم کی جذباتیت۔ بومین ازم اور کھویا کھویا سا انداز سرت چندر چٹرجی کے دور کا نتیجہ تھا اور ایسے سماجی رشتوں کا پتہ دے رہا تھا جو تبدیلی کا متنی تھا اور زندگی کی ترتیب نو کے خواب دیکھ رہا تھا اس کے باوجود سرت کے ناول محض گزری ہوئے تاریخ کے صفحات نہیں ہیں بلکہ ان میں انسان کا وہ پہلو اجاگر ہوا ہے جو آج بھی سماجی انصاف اور نئے تبدیلی آہنگ کی تلاش کا حوصلہ رکھتا ہے۔ انسانی شخصیت کا یہ حصہ آج بھی زندہ اور تابندہ ہے گو آج اس خواہش کی نوعیت اور اس اضطراب کے نام بدل گئے ہیں۔ سرت کی مقبولیت کا یہی راز ہے۔

سرت چندر چٹرجی نے ایک ایسے دور میں آنکھ کھولی جو ہندوستان کی ادبی زندگی میں ٹیگور۔ نذر۔ اقبال اور پریم چند کی آوازوں سے گونج رہا تھا۔ گاندھی اور آرد بندو کے فلسفے فکری اور سیاسی افق پر چھائے ہوئے تھے ہندوستان اپنی انفرادیت کی تلاش میں تھا۔ یہ انفرادیت دراصل آزادی اور خود مختاری کے سیاسی مطالبے کا بھی ایک روپ تھی۔ اگر ہندوستان کو اپنے آپ کو پانا ہے اور ایک آزاد مملکت کی حیثیت سے ابھرنا تھا تو اسے ایک فکری انفرادیت بھی درکار تھی اس کی ایک اپنی فلسفیانہ شخصیت بھی لازم تھی یہ تلاش مختلف سطحوں پر اور مختلف راستوں سے ہوئی۔ سرت چند کے ناولوں میں یہ تلاش زالے ڈھنگ سے ہوئی اس انداز اور اسلوب پر سرت کی اپنی انفرادیت کی ہر اس قدر واضح طور پر موجود ہے کہ انہیں کسی کا مقلد نہیں کہا جاسکتا اپنے ممتاز ترین ہم عصروں کی بلند آوازیں میں بھی انہوں نے اپنا انفرادی لہجہ اور آہنگ نہیں کھویا اور یہ معمولی کارنامہ نہیں ہے۔

انیسویں صدی کے بنگالی ادب کا تجزیہ کرتے ہوئے بنگالی نقاد قاضی عبدالودود نے لکھا ہے کہ اس دور میں بنگالی ذہن کی ندرت پسندی اور یورپ کی نئی انسان دوستی کے مٹنے کے اثرات کو بنیادی محرکات کا درجہ دیا جاسکتا ہے۔ بنگال کے نشاۃ ثانیہ نے ان اثرات کو قبول کر کے تین اہم دھارے اختیار کئے۔ ایک دھارا راجہ رام موہن رائے کے برہمن سماج کا تھا۔ جس نے اصلاحی میلانات کو تقویت دی اور مغرب سے ابھرے دے تصورات کو قدیم ہندوستانی فکر سے پیوند کر کے نئے آگہی تک پہنچنے کی کوشش کی۔ دوسرا دھارا ہنری دی وی ان درزیو کی عقلیت پسندی کا وہ رجحان تھا جو ہندو کالج کلکتہ کے زیر اثر پر دان چڑھا اور جس کا سب سے ممتاز علمبردار مدھو سودن دت کو قرار دیا جاسکتا ہے مگر ان دونوں کے ساتھ ساتھ ایک تیسرا دھارا قدیم ہندو طرز فکر اور طرز تمدن کے احیا کا بھی تھا جو راما کرشن، دو بکاشند اور ادبی دنیا میں بنکم چند چٹرجی کی تخلیقات میں نمایاں ہوا۔ خود راجندر ناتھ ٹیگور بھی اپنے دور آغاز میں بنکم چندر ہی سے متاثر تھے اور نو ہندویت، کے اثرات سے نکلنے میں انہیں کچھ وقت لگا۔

بیویں صدی کو یہ پوری وراثت ملی گو اس صدی کا لب و لہجہ ٹیگور کی نظم ”نود دیا“ اور ۱۹۰۵ء کے تقیم بنگال کے خلاف تحریک سے بنا دونوں میں حب وطن کا گہرا جذبہ اور ایک تہذیبی انفرادیت کی تلاش کا تصور نمایاں ہے ٹیگور کی شاعری نے اس کے ساتھ ساتھ ”نوپندویت“ کی تجدید پرستی کی جگہ روحانیت اور متصوفانہ الوہیت کی لے تیز کردی اس روح کو نذر الاسلام نے روحانی غنائت سے معمور باغیانہ لہجہ بخٹا اور سرت چند نے اس ساؤی آئین کو زمین پر اتار لانے کی کوشش کی۔ سرت اسی اعتبار سے بیویں صدی کی ایک نئی آواز کی طرح ابھرتے ہیں کہ پہلی بار سرت کے نادلوں میں مظلوم طبقے سے اٹھا ہمدردی ہی نہیں ہے بلکہ ان کے دکھ درد میں شریک ہونے اور اس ذلتوں اور تشنہ کامیوں میں شامل ہونے کی کوشش ملتی ہے۔ یہاں چاروں طرف بھری ہوئی زندگی اپنی پوری درد مندی اور سنگینی کے ساتھ نظر آتی ہے۔ جیسے انسان مشیت کے ہاتھ میں کچے مٹی کے کھلونوں کی طرح گرکھا جا رہا ہو لیکن اپنی تمام مجبوری اور بے بسی کے باوجود اس کھلونے کی اپنی ایک ایسی آن بان ایسا تیکھا پن ہے جو اسے حالات کے سامنے سر جھکائے نہیں دیتا اور مٹے مٹے بھی اس کا بانچن اندھیرے میں ایک روشن کیر جھوٹا چلا جاتا ہے۔

سرت کے نادل پڑھنے والے اردو دان طبقہ اکثر ان کے نادلوں میں ایک طرف تو میر کی شاعری کی سی درد مندی اور رزمی محسوس کرے گا۔ جہاں انسان کی عظمت کا ترانہ بھی موجود ہے اور اسی کی بے بسی اور مجبوری کا کرب ناک احساس بھی ہے اور دوسری طرف سادت حسن منقہ کے افسانوں کی سی فضا پائے گا۔ جن میں ایک باغیانہ بانچن اور سماج کی حقیقت پندانہ عکاسی پر زور ہے مگر سماج کی چیرہ دستی اور حالات کی سنگینی کے باوجود خراب سے خراب اور بدتر سے بدتر مجرم کے اندر چھپے ہوئے انسان کی انسانیت پر کبھی نہ مٹنے والا ایمان موجود ہے۔

اردو دنیا میں سرت اپنے ادیبان دور کے نادل ”دیوداس“ کی بنا پر سب سے زیادہ مقبول ہوئے اس نادل کے کئی ترجمے چھپے پھر فلم نے اسے مقبول بنایا اس میں کوئی مشبہ نہیں کہ سرت چند کا آرٹ فکر و فن کے اعتبار سے آگے چل کر بہت زیادہ پایدہ ہوا اور دیوداس اس شاندار سفر میں محض ایک تابندہ نقش پا بن کر رہ گیا اس میں بھی شک نہیں کہ آج کے معیاروں سے پرکھا جائے تو دیوداس کا پورا کردار نہایت جذباتی خواب پرست اور آئیڈیلٹ دکھائی دے گا۔ جو آج کے زمانے کے فکری آئینک سے مطابقت نہیں رکھتا لیکن ان کیوں کے باوجود دیوداس کے کردار میں سماجی نظام سے ٹکراتے والے باغی کے کردار کی کشش موجود ہے جو مٹ سکتا ہے زمانے کے آگے جھک نہیں سکتا جس کے ہاں جذبے کا خلوص اور اس خلوص کی خاطر جان دیے کا دم خم تو ہے مگر مصلحت کے آگے سپرد لانے کی کمزوری نہیں ہے۔ اس اعتبار سے کردار اپنی شالی اور نیم اخلاطونی محبت اور جذباتیت کے باوجود گونجے کے درتھر اور ودرنگ ہائٹس کے ہیرو کی طرح عجیب و غریب دلکشی رکھتا ہے۔ جسے زمانے کے مذاق کی تبدیلی ممکن طور پر ختم نہیں کر سکی ہے۔

دیوداس سے جو ایک لطیف تانا بانا سرت کے دوسرے سمجھوں نادلوں تک چلا آیا ہے یہ ہے سماج کی نظر سے گئے ہوئے کرداروں کی انسانیت یہ ایسے انسان ہیں جن کی نیک سرشت تاریکی اور جرم کے دامن میں جگمگاتی ہے سماج ایسے انسانوں کے ظاہر پر نظر کرتا ہے ان کے اندر چھپی ہوئی انسانیت کو نہیں دیکھتا۔ سرت کیچڑ میں پڑے ہوئے ان قیمتی موتوں کو اٹھالیے ہیں ان کی بستی اور گمراہی کی آلودگی پونچھ ڈالتے ہیں اور ان کی اصل آب و تاب اور جھک دمک کو بے نقاب کر دیتے ہیں۔ کردار جتنا زیادہ مظلوم ہوگا اور جتنا زیادہ غلط فہمیوں کا شکار ہوگا سرت کو اتنا ہی عزیز ہوگا۔

سرت کے نادلوں میں خوبصورتی اور مظلومیت کا چولی دامن کا ساتھ ہے۔ عورت کی تصویر کشی میں سرت چند نے خوبصورتی اور مظلومیت کے اس رشتے کو پوری طرح ملحوظ رکھا ہے۔ بھی نادلوں میں عورت کی حالت زار کا جو نقشہ

سرت کے ہاں کھینچا گیا ہے اس کی کوئی دوسری نظیر نہیں ملتی یہ مظلومیت دوسری ہے ایک سماجی ظلم ہے جس کا بوجھ انسان کو مادی شکلوں میں جھیلنا پڑتا ہے دوسرا وہ باطنی کرب ہے جس کا اندازہ اوپری طور پر نہیں ہوتا اور جو پوری شخصیت کو ٹکڑے ٹکڑے کے ڈالتا ہے عورت سرت چندر کے ناولوں میں ان دونوں مظالم کا شکار ہے اور قدم قدم پر اس کی نرمی، لطافت اور خوبصورتی جہاں ہوس کے سینے میں شیعے کی تڑپ بیدار کر دیتی ہے وہاں خود اس کا اپنا انسانی وجود درد اور کرب سے جو چور ہوتا نظر آتا ہے سرت نے عورت کو جتنے روپ میں دیکھا ہے اور اس کی مظلومیت کے جتنے گوشے بے نقاب کئے ہیں اس کی مثال ملنی مشکل ہے۔

دوسرے مظلوموں کے ساتھ بھی سرت کا یہی رویہ ہے مزدوروں اور کسانوں سے انہیں ہمدردی ہی نہیں ہے وہ ان سے اپنا رشتہ جوڑ لیتے ہیں اور کسان کی زندگی کو بار بار اپنا موضوع بناتے ہیں۔ سیاسی غلامی میں جکڑا ہوا اقتصادی طور پر پسماندہ ہندوستان اور اس کے غلام باشندے ان کے ناولوں میں بار بار اپنی جھلک دکھاتے ہیں ذات پات، مذہبی تنگ نظری اور ظلمت پرستی کے اداہم میں پھنسی ہوئی انسانیت کو ہر طرح کی غلامی سے آزاد دیکھنا ان کا خواب ہے اور ان کا ہر ناول انسان کی آزادی کی اس خواہش کا علمبردار ہے۔

سرت چندر کے ہاں انسان ابھی تک زمین سے اکھڑا نہ تھا اس کے رشتے سماجی تھے اور مشترکہ خاندان نے اسے ادایت اور اجتماعیت سے بہت کچھ باندھ رکھا تھا اس نے اس کا احتجاج بھی آج کے اکھڑے ہوئے فرد کا احتجاج نہ تھا بلکہ اس فرد کا احتجاج تھا جو فرسودہ قدروں کے پیسے سے بندھا ہوا تھا اور اپنے زمانے کے سارے کھڑاک کو ٹھکرانے کے باوجود اس سے الگ ہونے کی طاقت نہیں رکھتا تھا اسی نے بنگالی ادب کے ایک نقاد نے انہیں "رسوئی گھر کا فنکار" قرار دیا کیونکہ جس زندگی کی وہ تصویر کشی کرتے ہیں وہ بنگال کی عام گھریلو زندگی تھی اور ان کے کردار گھر آگن کو آباد کرنے والی معصوم اور مظلوم ہستیاں تھیں۔ "بڑی دیدی" اور "پریتا" اسی ماحول سے جڑی ہوئی ہیں لیکن زندگی تو سرت کے لیے محض ایک ذریعہ، اظہار کا درجہ رکھتی تھی اس کے ذریعے وہ جس مقصد تک پہنچنا چاہتے ہیں وہ تو ان گھریلو زندگی کے درمیان ظلمت پرستی اور استحصال کی زنجیروں سے آزادی کا تصور ہے جو ان دیواروں سے کیا سبھی دیواروں اور سرحدوں سے اوپر اٹھ جاتا ہے۔

سرت چندر کے بارے میں کہا جاتا ہے کہ اپنے تمام انقلابی بت شکنی کے باوجود روایتی ہندو تصور سے سمجھوتہ کر لیتے ہیں اس کا ثبوت ان کی تصور پرستی سے دیا جاتا ہے ان کے ہاں محبت کا ارضی پہلو آہستہ آہستہ تصوراتی سطح تک پہنچ جاتا ہے جس کے بارے میں ان کا جو رد عمل ہے وہ ان کے قارئین کو چونکا تا نہیں ہے ان کے اندر اسطو کے الفاظ میں "تفقیہ جذبات" یا کھٹا رسب پیدا کرنے والے دہشت اور درد مندی جگاتا ہے ان کی ہیردینس جننی علی کی منزل تک پہنچتے پہنچتے رک جاتی ہیں اور پلٹ کر روایتی سماج کے اخلاق و آئین کے سرحدوں پر ہی کھڑی رہ جاتی ہیں اس کا راز دراصل سرت چندر کی تصور پرستی اور سمجھوتہ پسندی میں مضمر ہے جو ان کے متوسط طبقے کی ذہنیت اور اس کی حد بندیوں کی آئینہ دار ہے۔ اس کے علاوہ یہ بھی یاد رکھنے کی بات ہے کہ سرت چندر اپنے دور کے پڑھنے والوں کے ذوق کے پابند ہیں۔ ان کے ناول اپنے زمانے کے مذاق عام کو نظر انداز نہیں کر سکے ان کا کارنامہ یہاں بھی یہی ہے کہ انہوں نے اپنے کوسستی شہرت کی نذر کرنے کے بجائے مذاق عام کو بلند کرنے کی ادبی اور فنی حقیقت کو بائیدہ تر کرنے میں کامیابی حاصل کی۔

اس سمجھوتے کی ایک اور وجہ سرت چندر کے ہاں ضبط و نظم restraint کی خصوصیت ہے۔ سرت لطیف



جذبوں کے فن کار ہیں جذبوں سے ان کا لگاؤ ایسا گہرا ہے کہ ان میں روایت کے اثرات تلاش کے جا سکتے ہیں۔ لیکن جذبے کی شدت میں سرت کو پہنا نہیں آتا وہ جذبوں کے منبہا میں رہ کر بھی ایک مناسب نقطے پر ٹھہر سکتے ہیں اور جذبات کے خودش کو لطیف آہنگی اور نرمی میں تبدیل کر سکتے ہیں جو ایک اعلیٰ فن کار کی پہچان ہے۔

بنگال غربت اور حساس تصور پرستی کی سرزمین ہے اس لئے یہاں روایت کا خودش جس تیزی سے پھیلا اسی تیزی سے حقیقت پسندی کے میلان کا بھی عروج ہوا سرت چند اس صحت مند تشکیک، اس سنگین حقیقت پسندی اور اس بت شکن آزاد خیالی کے نمائندہ ہیں جو روایتی زنجیروں کو توڑ کر نئے نئے فکر کی طرف گامزن ہونا چاہتی تھی۔ اسی لئے مذہب اور روحانیت کی وہ گہری چھاپ جو بنکم چندر اور راجندر ناتھ ٹیگور کے ہاں ملتی ہے سرت کے ہاں تقریباً ناپید ہے ایک نقاد نے اس حقیقت کی طرف اشارہ کیا ہے کہ بنکم اور ٹیگور دونوں کے نادلوں میں مسلم کردار سرت چندر کے نادلوں سے کہیں زیادہ ہیں بلکہ یہ کہنا زیادہ مناسب ہوگا کہ سرت کے نادلوں میں مسلم کردار تقریباً ناپید ہیں یہی نہیں بلکہ بنکم اور ٹیگور دونوں نے بعض مسلم کرداروں کو ہمدردی اور دلسوزی کے ساتھ پیش کیا ہے۔ زیب النساء یا کابی والا اس کی مثالیں ہیں۔ سرت چندر کی کہانیوں میں ہمیش کے ہمدرد مسلم کسان کو چھوڑ کر سرت کے نادلوں میں شاید ہی کوئی مسلم اہم کردار ملے۔ لیکن اس کے باوجود سرت کے بڑھنے والوں کو ان کے نادلوں میں بنکم اور ٹیگور دونوں سے زیادہ سیکورٹا مذہبی اور غیر روحانی فضا کا احساس ہوتا ہے اور ایسا لگتا ہے کہ وہ کسی اور اعلیٰ سطح پر سانس لینے کی جگہ اپنی مانوس زمین میں بے ہوشے انسانوں کے درمیان ہے اور اسی مادی زندگی کا ایک حصہ ہے جو اس کے چاروں طرف بکھری ہے۔

سرت چندر بنگال کے مخصوص تہذیبی اور معاشرتی ماحول سے بلند نہیں ہو سکے مائل یہ انحطاط جاگیردار اسی نظام کی دہی ہوئی ان قدروں سے وہ برابر ٹکراتے رہے جو ہندو سماج کے پاؤں کی زنجیر بنی ہوئی تھیں۔ لیکن چونکہ یہ زنجیریں ہندو کی دوسری تہذیبوں کے پاؤں میں بھی پڑی ہوئی تھیں اس لئے ان سے ٹکراتے کی آواز دوسرے حلقوں میں بھی مسنویت اور احترام کے ساتھ سنی گئی اور اس کے ہندوستان گیر اثرات برآمد ہوئے۔

اس کے علاوہ سرت دراصل انسان اور انسان کے درمیان رشتوں کے فن کار ہیں ٹیگور کا موضوع انسان اور فطرت کے درمیانی رشتے ہیں بنکم کا موضوع فرد کے بجائے تہذیب و تاریخ سے اجتماع کے ایک رشتے ہیں نندل کا موضوع فرد اور سماج کے درمیانی رشتے ہیں سرت انسانوں کے پیچ در پیچ رشتوں کے عکاس ہیں اور اپنے رشتوں کے ملتے جلتے بانے سے وہ انسانی معاشرے کی لطیف ترین گہرائیوں تک پہنچنے کی کوشش کرتے ہیں فرد دوسرے افراد کے مطابقت اور مطابقت ٹکراؤ اور مفاہم کے عمل ہی میں اپنے کو پہچانتا ہے اپنی شخصیت کی تہوں کو دریافت کرتا ہے اور نئی تہیں پاتا ہے اس اعتبار سے سرت کا فن صرف بنگال یا ہندوستان کی سماجی اور تہذیبی سرحدوں سے بلند ہو کر وسیع تر انسانی و آفاقی مسنویت اختیار کر لیتا ہے اور اس علم تک پہنچتا ہے کہ انسان کی اپنی شخصیت میں جذبے اور عقل کا توازن اور تناسب کیا ہے اور ان میں باہمی آہنگ تک رسائی حاصل کرنے کے دوران فرد کیسے کیسے پر پیچ منازل و مراحل سے گزرتا ہے ظاہر ہے کہ یہ محنت خواں محض بنگال یا ہندوستان کے مخصوص تہذیبی اور تاریخی حالات سے گذرنے والے انسان کے لئے ہی اہم اور معنی خیز نہیں ہیں بلکہ شاید ان کے پیچھے فرد کی ابدی جستجو کی داستان بھی چھپی ہوئی ہے۔

سرت کی زندگی خود اس قسم کی ابدی جستجو ہی کی داستان ہے۔ ۱۵ ستمبر ۱۸۷۶ء کو ایک کٹر برہمن خاندان میں پیدا ہوئے والا یہ بچہ چالیس سال تک 'ادارہ مسیحائی' کی سی زندگی گزارتا رہا اور ابدی جستجو میں ادھر ادھر بھٹکتا پھرا شاید اسی بنا پر ہندی کے مشہور ناول نگار دشنو پر بھاکر نے سرت چندر پر اپنے سوانحی ناول کا عنوان 'ادارہ مسیحائی'

قرار دیا آوارہ اس نے کہ وہ در بدر بھٹکتے رہے مگر اس نے کہ جس درد کا درماں وہ تلاش کرنا چاہتے تھے وہ انہیں ملا ہوا نہ ملا ہوا ان کی تخلیقات میں ان کی اپنی نسل اور ان کے بعد کی کئی نسلیں نے اپنے درد کا درماں ضرور پایا۔ اور ایسی صورتوں میں درد سے واقف ہو جانا ہی ان کا درماں ہوتا ہے۔

سرت غربت میں پلے بڑھے اور لڑکپن اپنے آبائی گاؤں دیوانند پور (بنگلہ) اور بھالگپور (بہار) میں گزارا جہاں انہوں نے اسکول کی تعلیم مکمل کی ۱۸۹۶ء میں والدہ کے انتقال کے بعد اور اپنے والد کی مالی پریشانیوں کے سبب انہیں خاندان کے لئے نوکری کرنی پڑی ۱۹۰۳ء میں والدہ کے انتقال کے بعد کلکتے میں کچھ دن نوکر رہے اور پھر برما چلے گئے جہاں وہ تیرہ برس رہے اور ایک برہمن عورت سے شادی کی جس سے ایک لڑکا ہوا۔ بیوی اور لڑکا دونوں کچھ ہی سال بعد طاعون کی نذر ہو گئے سرت کا مکان اور کتب خانہ نذر آتش ہو گیا کچھ عرصہ بعد انہوں نے دوسری شادی کی اور دوبارہ کلکتہ شروع کیا۔ بنگالی میں ان کی کہانی اور ناولوں کی اشاعت سے شہرت اور مالی آسودگی حاصل ہوئی ۱۹۱۶ء میں ملائیت کی وجہ سے بنگال واپس آگئے اور یہیں کلکتہ کے ایک نرسنگ ہوم میں ۶۲ سال کی عمر میں ۱۶ جنوری ۱۹۳۵ء کو انتقال کیا۔

سرت چند نے ۱۶ سال کی عمر سے کلکتہ شروع کیا۔ ایک ادبی مقابلے میں ان کی ایک کہانی کو انعام ملا سب سے پہلے ان کا مختصر ناول "بڑی دیدی" کلکتے کے ایک بنگالی رسالے میں ۱۹۰۷ء میں شائع ہوا اور ۱۹۱۳ء میں اپنے ناول "رامیر سوامی" مقبول ہوا۔ سرت کی اہم ترین تخلیقات یا تو برما کے دوران قیام کی تصنیف ہیں یا اس دوران ان کا خاکہ بنایا گیا ہے۔ ۱۹۱۳ء سے ۱۹۲۶ء تک ان کی تخلیقات کا سہرا درد تھا ان کا پہلا طویل ناول "بیلی سماج" ۱۹۱۶ء میں چھپا جس میں بنگال کے دیہات کی عکاسی کی گئی تھی اس ناول کے چھپنے ہی سخت تنقیدیں شائع ہونے لگیں دوسرے طویل ناول "چترہن" کی اشاعت کے بعد یہ لے اور بڑھی اس ناول کو چند تہذیب کی اقدار پر سخت تنقید قرار دیا گیا۔ کیونکہ اس میں اخلاقی کرداروں کو خوبصورت بنا کر پیش کیا گیا ہے سرت نے اپنے مقصد کو ان الفاظ میں بیان کیا۔

"میں سماج کے ان لوگوں کا مروجہ منت ہوں جو کچھ مانگے بغیر سب کچھ دیتے آئے ہیں جو کمزور اور اور مظلوم ہیں اور اپنی غربت اور بے بسی کے باوجود یہ نہیں محسوس کرتے کہ وہ ہر انسانی حق سے محروم کر دیئے گئے ہیں دراصل ان کی مظلومیت نے مجھے بولنے پر مجبور کیا انہوں نے عوام کے سامنے اپنی شکایات پیش کرنے کے لئے مجھے بھیجا۔"

سرت چند بیسویں صدی کی تیسری دہائی کے سماجی احتجاج کی ادبی تحریک کے علمبردار تھے۔ یہ تحریک جو کلکٹنگ کے نام سے ابھر چندیستانی ادب کو نئی انسانیت دوستی کا تصور دے گئی سرت کا دائرہ محدود ہے وہ عام طور پر ذاتی تجربے کے دائرے سے باہر نہیں نکلتے صرف اپنے ایک ناول "شیش پرشن" (باقی سوال) میں وہ اپنے راست تجربے کے دائرے سے آگے بڑھے ہیں جو ۱۹۳۱ء میں شائع ہوا تھا۔ ان کے ناول "پاکھروانی" سیاسی ناول ہے لیکن یہاں بھی ان کی زندگی کے تجربات کی پرچھائیاں صاف نظر آتی ہیں ۱۹۲۱ء سرت چند رچرچی کاغذ میں شریک ہو گئے تھے اور ان کی سیاسی دلچسپیوں کا آغاز ہو چکا تھا اس وقت سے لے کر مرتے دم تک وہ آزادی کے مجاہد رہے اور اس جہاد میں وہ مسلح بغاوت اور تشدد کو بھی جائز قرار دیتے تھے یہی عکس "پاکھروانی" میں بھی ابھر آیا ہے۔

غرض اپنے محدود دائرہ میں وہ کر بھی سرت چند چترہن نے۔ جی احتجاج کی آواز بلند کی اور صدیوں پرانی روایتی ذہنوں کو توڑنے کی کوشش کی۔

نئی نسل کے لئے سرت چند کی وراثت کا ایک اہم جزو یہی سماجی احتجاج کا لب و لبو ہے۔ سماجی احتجاج محض فیشن

اور فارمولے سے عبارت نہیں بلکہ ایک ایسی دنیا میں جو ظلم و استبداد سے بھری ہوئی ہے جس میں شخص کی انفرادیت اور آزادی کو ہر لمحہ نئے خطرے درپیش ہوتے ہیں سرت چند کی وراثت ایک ایسے روشن خیال اور دردمند فن کار کی وراثت ہے جو آزادانہ زندگی گزارنے کی جرات کر سکتا تھا اور جس نے ذات پات کے دنیافوسے بندھنوں میں جکڑے ہوئے سماج کو جرات مندانہ زندگی گزارنے کا خواب دکھایا۔

سرت کی نظریں حقیقتوں کے باہری روپ پر ٹھہر نہیں جاتیں اسے توڑ کر اور گہری اترتی تھیں اور وہ کوڑے کیاڑ کی گندگی سے موتی ڈھونڈھ نکالتے ہیں اور یہی خصوصیت انہیں اپنے دور کے دوسرے نگہنے والوں سے ممتاز کرتی ہے وہ زندگی کی حقیقتوں سے نظر ملانے اور انسانوں کی باہمی رشتوں کی پیچیدگیوں میں اترنے کا حوصلہ رکھتے ہیں اور ان کی ہمدردیاں ہمیشہ دبے کچلے انسانوں کے ساتھ رہی ہیں ان کا شاہدہ اور تجربہ بتاتا ہے کہ دبے کچلے انسان ہی تبدیلی کے سچے تمنائی ہوتے ہیں ان کی مصیبتوں سے زندگی کا نیا عرفان پھوٹتا ہے اور انہیں کی مضطرب آرزوئیں انسانیت کے بہتر مستقبل کی ضمانت ہیں کیونکہ وہ بڑی سے بڑی قربانی دے کر بھی اپنے سینے سے زمانہ حال کی چیرہ دستیوں کے بوجھ کو اتار پھینکنے کے لئے مجبور ہیں سرت چند کی روایت انہیں مجبوروں اور مزدوروں کی حمایت کی روایت ہے جو ادب کو زندگی کا اشاریہ ہی نہیں جانتی اسے بہتر بنانے کا حوصلہ بھی پاتی ہے اور یہی سرت کی ایسی وراثت ہے جس کی قدر و قیمت آئے والی نسلوں کے لئے مدتوں تک قائم رہے گی۔

# On Saratchandra Chatterji

Mohammad Hassan

Second only to Tagore and Nazrul Islam, Saratchandra is the most popular Bengali writer in the Urdu knowing world. Several of his novels have been translated into Urdu and have gained popularity and acceptance to the extent that they have influenced Urdu fiction and left their impact on our social attitudes. The modern youth dislike exuberance of sentimentalism and reject the lost, forlorn, dreamy characters. To them, these are unreal, merely a pale reflection of excessive idealism. But, in fact, this sentimentalism, Bohemianism, and lost, forlorn style were the product of Saratchandra's age and indicate social relationships restive for change and dreaming for a reconstruction of life in a new pattern. Nevertheless, Saratchandra's novels are not merely pages from ancient history, but reflect that part of the human ego which has the courage to search for a cultural equilibrium based on social justice and is still alive though the nature and scope of this yearning has changed names. This continuity is the secret of Saratchandra's popularity.

Saratchandra Chatterji was born in an age when the Indian literary scene was resounding with the voices of Tagore, Nazrul, and Iqbal. The philosophical thought of Gandhi and Aurobindo had tinged the intellectual and political horizons. India was in search of her identity, which was another aspect of her demand for political liberty and independence. If India was to find herself and emerge as an independent country, she had to find her own philosophy of existence. Hence a philosophical identity was the order of the day, and this was sought after in many ways, among them were Saratchandra's novels where this search was carried on in a unique manner which bore the imprint of his inimitable individuality. Saratchandra did not lose his individual tenor even in the midst of the high sounding echoes of his outstanding contemporaries, and this was no mean achievement.

Kazi Abdul Wadud, while analysing the literary trends of the nineteenth century Bengali literature, pointed out that the new humanist philosophy prevalent in Europe had combined with the innovative gains of the Bengali mind to motivate a new sensibility. Bengali literature accepted the influence of the Indian Renaissance and expressed it in three ways. One was Raja Rammohan Roy's Brahmo Samaj which stabilised the reformist trend and endeavoured to reach a new sensibility

by grafting new ideals of the West on the indigenous Indian thought. Second was the trend originating in the Hindu College, Calcutta, under the inspiration of Henry Derozio, the most prominent of which was Michael Madhusudan Dutta. Parallel to both these trends ran the stream of revivalism of ancient Hindu thought and culture inspired by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, which found its literary expression in Bankimchandra Chatterji. Even Rabindranath Tagore in his early writings was deeply impressed by him, and it took him some time to shake off the influences of Neo-Hinduism from his writings.

The twentieth century succeeded to this heritage though the tone of this century was set by Tagore's poem *Naibēdyā* and the anti-partition movement of Bengal of 1905. Both these contained a strong element of patriotism and a yearning for cultural identity. In Tagore, Hindu revivalism was replaced by a spiritual mystical search for the Divine. Nazrul Islam gave a lyrical romantic tinge with his revolutionary songs, and Saratchandra tried to bring this ethereal sensibility down to earth. It was in this respect that Saratchandra emerged as a new voice in the twentieth century. For the first time, there appeared a literary artist not only sympathetic to the exploited classes, but eager to share their woes and sufferings, their ignominy, humiliations and deprivations. In his works the life scattered all round appears in all its ruthlessness and sorrow, as if man is but a toy made and unmade out of clay. Nevertheless, this toy made of clay is not without a certain heroism of its own. It retains its identity which resists all onslaughts of the circumstances, and even when it has no choice but to be wiped out of existence, its resistance leaves a radiant streak of light which illuminates the horizon for some time.

Saratchandra's novels remind an average Urdu reader of Mir's pathos and tenderness which contain both hymns in honour of human dignity as well as elegies on its utter helplessness and deprivation. They remind him of Sadat Hasan Manto's short stories which emphasise the rebellious spirit of youth and realistic portrayal of society and an unshakable belief in the goodness of the 'fallen man' even though the apparent character of the person may be that of the worst criminal.

Saratchandra achieved popularity among Urdu speaking public through his novel *Dēbdās*. Several Urdu translations of the novel were published. Two films on the story also made it popular. Undoubtedly, Saratchandra left behind this popular landmark of his art and achieved still greater heights in his novels. So much so that *Dēbdās* remains only as a shining reminder of a glorious past.

Undoubtedly, the entire character of *Dēbdās* will appear to be highly sentimental, idealistic and visionary according to modern standards. He does not fit in with the present scheme of values. Nevertheless, the character of *Dēbdās* retains a strange attraction of a hero who has the courage to clash with the social systems like a rebel. He was vanquished but not humbled. He had the sincerity of heart, and the courage to defy. He refuses to succumb to expediency. In this respect *Dēbdās* resembles Goethe's Werther and the hero of the famous novel *Wuthering Heights*. They share the same attractiveness, the same idealism, the same platonic love and the same sentimentality which endear them to readers even to the present day.

There is a tender link between *Dēbdās* and other novels of Saratchandra, all of which have in common a deep faith in the humanity of the 'fallen man'. These include persons with darkness and crime all round. But they retain a beauty and sincerity of their own. Society is misled by their appearances. It misses their inherent goodness. Saratchandra extricates these pearls from the dustbin of society, removes the dirt of guilt, crime, and degradation from them and reveals their original radiance and beauty. The more exploited and the more misunderstood a character is, the nearer he is to the heart of Saratchandra.

Beauty and exploitation go hand in hand in Saratchandra's novels. Both of them have been embodied in the portraiture of womanhood. Woman is both beautiful and exploited.

He depicts Indian women as an exploited class. This exploitation is dual in nature. Firstly, a special exploitation which takes many material forms. Secondly, an internal impact which cannot be estimated by persons other than the victim herself. This completely breaks down the personality of the victim. In Saratchandra's novels womanhood is a victim of both these exploitations. On every step, her tenderness and beauty tempts her exploitor to take advantage of her and, yet in this process, the personality of a woman breaks into pieces. There can be hardly any parallel to it anywhere in Indian Novel.

The same is true about Saratchandra's sympathies with other exploited classes. He not only sympathises with the peasants and workers but tries to identify himself with them. He depicts the life of the peasantry. He paints the social life of an economically backward and politically enchained society. He fights against practically every manifestation of obscurantism, casteism, and religious bigotry. He dreams of a future when humanity will be able to release itself from all chains. Every one of his novels is a testament of faith in the liberty of mankind.

Nevertheless, at the time when Saratchandra wrote his novels, man was not uprooted from the land of his birth. His relations were still social relations. The joint family system had given him a sense of belonging. Therefore, his protest was not the protest of an uprooted individual but of a person still chained to the juggernaut of old and dying values. Even though he rejected all the evils of his inherited values, he had no strength to dissociate himself from the bondage of tradition. This was why a Bengali literary critic described Saratchandra as an 'artist of the kitchen', for the life which he depicted bore immediate links with the everyday life of a Bengali household. Characters delineated are none other than those who people the courtyards of Bengali homes. *Baradidi* and *Pariñitā* are both images from the same perspective. But the Bengali household remains only a medium for Saratchandra to express the idea of liberty and emancipation from all sorts of exploitation. While depicting the happenings within these four walls he soars far above them.

Another reason of this compromise is, perhaps, an innate sense of restraint in Saratchandra. He is an artist of tender emotions. Sentiments and emotions so deeply involve him that it is not difficult to trace a streak of romanticism in his art. But he does not leave himself to float in the current of emotions but restrains himself even in the midst of the storm, thus transforming the torrent of passion into tenderness and subtlety of his own, which is one of the qualities of a great artist.

Bengal is a land of poverty and idealism. Hence the deep and widespread impact of romanticism on its literature. This was followed by a wave of realism. Saratchandra inherited both these traditions, for he was an exponent of stark realism, romantic iconoclasm and free thinking which tried to tear asunder all chains of convention and proceed to new horizons of thought. The deep impact of religion and spiritualism so evident in Bankimchandra and Tagore is practically absent in Saratchandra.

Some critics have pointed out that while in Bankimchandra's and Tagore's novels there are a number of Muslim characters, and some of them, like Zēbun Nisā and Kābuliwālā, have been even sympathetically delineated, there are practically no Muslim characters in Saratchandra excepting the Muslim peasant in his story *Mahēs*. Nevertheless, in Saratchandra one finds much more secular and unspiritualistic atmosphere which gives a feeling of existing not on any unreal spiritual plane but on our own material world peopled with persons like ourselves. Here the novel is a part of the society we live in.

Saratchandra could not transcend Bengal's culture and society. All his life he was struggling for breaking the chains of feudal values which bound the Hindu society of his time, but since these chains had bound societies of other parts of India also, his voice echoed throughout the country and had national repercussions.

In fact, Saratchandra is an artist of human relationships while Tagore deals with the relations between man and nature and Bankimchandra with the relations between history and culture on one hand and the individual on the other and Nazrul is involved in a study of relations with individual and society. Saratchandra depicts the complexities of human relationships and it is through this study that he reaches the finer depths of society. An individual recognises himself only through his confrontation and adjustment with other individuals. In this process alone, he reaches new dimensions and his personality acquires new facets.

It is in this respect that Saratchandra's art soars high above the narrow limits of Bengal, or India, and acquires a human or a universal significance. The basic problem before him remains what the relationship between reason and passion is within a human personality and how a finer balance can be achieved between them and what labyrinths an individual has to go through to acquire this poise. Obviously, the quest cannot be confined to the regional boundaries of Bengal, or India, but encompasses the entire range of an individual's eternal quest for self-realisation.

Saratchandra's life itself was such a quest. On 15th September, 1876, an infant was born in an orthodox Brahmin family, who till his fortie.h year led the life of a wandering *Messiah* in a similar quest for self-realisation. That is why the renowned Hindi novelist Vishnu Prabhakar, titled his biographical novel on Saratchandra as *Āwārā Masihā*—a wandering messiah—wandering because he was restless ; Messiah because he was eager for a remedy of human sorrow. He did not get it, but in his creative efforts several generations found a mirror in which they could get a glimpse of their woes and sufferings. To be aware of one's sorrows is half the cure.

Saratchandra was brought up in poverty. His adolescence passed in Debanandapur (Bengal) and Bhagalpur (Bihar) where he completed his school education. After his mother's death in 1895, he had to take up employment to support his family. On his father's death in 1902, he spent a short period in a Calcutta office and then migrated to Burma, where he spent thirteen years. It was here that he married in a Brahmin family and was blessed with a male heir, but both died of plague soon after. His house and library were gutted and he was again all alone, sad and forlorn.

After some time, he remarried and started writing again. The publication of his novels and stories in Bengali brought him fame and some money. In 1916, due to failing health, he came back to Bengal and died on 16th January, 1938, at the age of sixty two in a nursing home in Calcutta.

Saratchandra started writing at the age of sixteen. His short story won prize in a literary competition. His short novel *Baradidi* published in a Calcutta journal in 1907 was the first to earn literary recognition for him. This was followed by a novelette *Rāmēr Sumati* in 1913. The best of his creative works were either written or conceived in Burma and the period 1913-1926 was his golden period. His first long novel *Palli-Samāj* appeared in 1916 which depicted the rural life and peasantry of Bengal. Its publication was followed by a bitter controversy.

His record, even longer, novel was *Charitrahin* which again evoked a controversy as it attacked values of the orthodox Hindu society, and according to its critics, presented unethical characters in a favourable light. Saratchandra described the main idea behind this novel thus :

"I am indebted to those in our society who gave without receiving, were exploited, were

weak and oppressed, who in their misery and helplessness could never see why they were deprived of every human right. It is their misery that made me speak out ; it is they who sent me to present their complaints before the public."

Saratchandra was in favour of the movement known as *Kallol Yug* which marked the spirit of social protest early in this century and which gave Indian literature a new sense of humanism.

Undoubtedly, Saratchandra's canvas was narrow. He usually confined himself to the world of his own direct experiences. Perhaps only in his novel *Śēṣ Praśna*, published in 1931, he moved beyond the orbit of his experiences. *Pathēr Dābī* is a political novel, but then Saratchandra had an experience of political life. In 1921 he had joined the Indian National Congress and had started taking interest in politics. He remained a steadfast crusader for political emancipation of the country and was an exponent for armed revolt and resurrection, and *Pathēr Dābī* was but a reflection of his political thoughts.

In short, even in his limited range of experiences and within the narrow canvas, Saratchandra consistently raised the banner of social protest and tried to break asunder the old chains of conventionalism.

For the new generation, this tenor of social protest makes him an important component of its heritage. This sharp note of social protest was neither just a formula, nor a part of fashionable tricks, but a sincere attempt to eliminate exploitation and oppression from a world full of misery and sorrow. At every step, dangers challenge the liberty and self-respect of the individual. Saratchandra's is the heritage of a highly sensitive and broad-minded artist who had the courage to lead a liberated life and to dream about releasing his society from the shackles of casteism and obscurantist bigotry.

Saratchandra does not stop at the outer appearances only but pierces through the outer shell and reveals the innate beauty. It is this which distinguishes him from his contemporaries. He has the courage to face the stark realities of contemporary life and to delve deep into the complexities of human relationships. His sympathies always rest with the exploited. His experience and observation point to the conclusion that it is only the exploited who sincerely desire change. It is their sorrows which are the fountain-head of the true knowledge of life. Their yearnings are the real guarantee for a better future of mankind because it is they who suffer most to release the entire mankind from the clutches of sufferings of the present.

Saratchandra's heritage is the heritage of identification with the exploited, which not only treats literature as an index of life but also strives to make it better. It is this heritage which will be respected and imbibed by the future generations for a long time to come.





# سرت چندر چٹرجی — ایک تاثر

از ڈاکٹر عبدالرؤف

فن کے بنیادی اصول اور اس کے جزئیات پر عبور رکھتا ہوا جب کوئی فن کار نئی جہتوں کو اپناتا ہے تو وہ فن کی عظمتوں کا ترجمان سمجھا جاتا ہے اور فن کا ترجمان ہونا بذات خود فنکار کی عظمت کی دلیل بن جاتا ہے۔ سرت چندر چٹرجی کا شمار دنیا کے ان عظیم فنکاروں میں ہونا چاہئے جنہوں نے اپنے عہد کی نئی جہتوں یعنی انسانی سماج سے متعلق نئے شعور کو جو حیات کی نادیہ تہوں میں پرورش پاتا رہتا ہے، اپنے فکر و فن کا مرکز بنایا۔

گذشتہ ڈھائی سو سال سے بنگال کی سرزمین نشاۃ ثانیہ کی سرزمین بنی رہی ہے۔ یہاں مختلف النوع سیاسی سماجی اور مذہبی تحریکیں پرورش پاتی رہی ہیں جو پورے ہندستان کو متاثر کرتی رہیں۔ مادی طور پر تاریخ کے اس نقطہ نظر کی توجیہ یوں کی جاسکتی ہے کہ ڈچ فرانسیسی اور انگریز تاجروں نے جو سائنس کی جدید ٹکنولوجی اور یورپ کی نشاۃ ثانیہ سے متاثر تھے سب سے پہلے بارینگلے کو اپنا کاروباری مرکز بنایا۔ ان بدلیسیوں کا تاجروں شور ہندستانی تاجروں کے مقابلے میں زیادہ بڑھتا تھا۔ تجارت کو منظم کرنے کے لئے سیاسی اقتدار بھی ضروری سمجھا گیا۔ چنانچہ ڈچ اور فرانسیسیوں کی بہ نسبت انگریزوں کو اس باب میں نمایاں کامیابی نصیب ہوئی جو حاکم وقت بن گئے۔ یہ تو سچو کہ یورپ کے جدید انقلابی افکار سے متاثر تھیں ہندستانی سیاست اور اقتصادیات میں ان کے قدم جمنے لگے اور ان کا حلقہ کار کدی پھیلتا گیا۔ بدلیسیوں کے اس رویے سے ہندستانی ذہنوں میں بیداری اور ساتھ ساتھ بیداری کا احساس بھی کروٹیں لینے لگا۔ اس نئے کی دوسری توجیہ یہ ہو سکتی ہے کہ اٹھارہویں صدی میں ان خطوں کو زیادہ اہمیت حاصل ہونے لگی جو بحری شاہراہوں (Sea Routes) سے منسلک تھے اس سے قبل گذشتہ صدیوں میں خشکی کی شاہ راہ (Land Routes) رکھنے والے خطے زیادہ نمایاں تھے۔ مغربی بنگال اس معاملے میں زیادہ خوش نصیب واقع ہوا ہے کہ یہاں سے خشکی کی راہیں سارے ملک میں پھیل جاتی ہیں اور اس کی بندرگاہ (Calcutta Port) سے بحری شاہ راہوں کے ذریعہ ساری دنیا سے تجارتی تعلقات پیدا کئے جاتے ہیں۔ کلکتہ کی بڑھتی ہوئی آبادی کا راز بھی اس کی بندرگاہ اور انڈسٹری میں پوشیدہ ہے۔ تہذیب و تمدن اور کچھ ثقافت کی نئی کونپیں اسی سرزمین سے پھوٹتی ہیں جہاں زیادہ سے زیادہ محنت کش عوام ایک مرکز پر مجتمع ہوتے ہیں۔

ادب اور دیگر فنون کے فروغ کا راز بھی اسی اجتماعیت میں ڈھونڈا جاسکتا ہے۔ یہی وجہ ہے کہ بنگال ادبی اور سیاسی تحریکوں میں پیش پیش رہا ہے۔ بنگلہ زبان نے اپنا سب سے پہلا ناول ”درگیز ندنی“ مصنفہ بکچندر چٹرجی ۱۸۹۵ء میں پیش کیا۔ جو غالباً تمام ہندستانی زبانوں میں پہلا ناول ہے۔ اسی طرح انیسویں صدی کے وسط میں ”مدھو سون دن دتا“ (۱۸۴۳ء تا ۱۸۴۴ء) نے بنگلہ زبان میں سب سے پہلی بار آزاد بکچوں کو رواج دیا۔ جہاں تک آزاد بکچوں کا تعلق ہے بنگلہ زبان کو اس ضمن میں ہندستان کی تمام زبانوں میں ادبیت کا شرف حاصل ہے۔ سرت چندر جیے عظیم ناول نگار کا اس سرزمین سے ابھرنے والا اور وقت کا مطالبہ تھا۔

سرت چندر کی مقبولیت اور عظمت کا راز ان کی انسان دوستی میں پوشیدہ ہے۔ فن انسان سے علاحدہ کوئی چیز نہیں۔ فن ان ہی چیزوں کی ترجمانی کرتا ہے جو انسانی خمیر اور سرشت میں بنیادی طور پر موجود ہوتی ہیں۔ انسان کا شعور محدود ہونے کے باوجود بڑا پھیلاؤ رکھتا ہے اور اس کا شعور ایک اتھاہ سمندر ہوتا ہے۔ اس اتھاہ سمندر کی تہ میں اترنا اور تحقیق و تلاش کے بعد اپنے تجربات کا ابلاغ کرنا فنکار کے عزم و عظمت اور اس کی کامیابی کا ضامن ہوتا ہے۔

سرت چند انسانی نفسیات پر دسترس رکھتے ہیں وہ انسانی لاشعور کی تہوں میں ددر تک جاتے ہیں اور گہرائیوں سے کچھ ایسی تصویریں بھیجتے ہیں جن میں قاری کا اپنا چہرہ جھانکتا نظر آتا ہے۔

کسی کردار کے مستقبل کا تعین ایک شکل امر ہے۔ منطقی اور فلسفہ یہاں ددر تک ساتھ نہیں دیتے۔ ناولٹ اپنی حیات کے سہارے اس کٹھن مرحلے کو طے کرتا ہے۔ وہ اپنے کرداروں کے ساتھ ساتھ رہتا ہے اور کردار اپنے (action) (عمل) سے اپنا مستقبل خود بتا دیتے ہیں۔ کردار نویسی ناول کی روح رواں ہوتی ہے۔ جس سے عہدہ برآ ہونے کے لئے خون جگر درکار ہوتا ہے۔ ناولٹ یہاں اپنا پیٹہ پانی کرتا ہے۔ سرت چند ر اپنے کسی کردار کو idealise نہیں کرتے۔ کردار خود اپنا تعارف کراتے ہیں اور اپنے عمل سے اپنا انجام بنا دیتے ہیں۔ چند مستالیں ملاحظہ ہوں۔

”بڑی دیدی“ کا ہیرو سریندر ایک زمیندار کا بیٹا تھا۔ جس کی پرورش گاؤں میں ہوئی تھی وہ ایم اے پاس ایک بھولا بھالا نوجوان تھا۔ اس کی سوتیلی ماں تھی۔ گھر کی فضا اسے پسند نہیں آتی تھی۔ تنگ آنکھ شہر بھاگ آیا۔ شہر کا ماحول اس کے لئے اجنبی تھا۔ وہ یہاں کسی کو نہیں جانتا تھا۔ فاقہ مستی میں بسر کرتا تھا۔ ملازمت کی تلاش تھی، ادھر ادھر سرگرداں پھرتا رہا۔ آخر شہر کے ایک رئیس کے ہاں اسے یوشن مل گئی۔ یہاں ایک نو سالہ بچی کو پڑھانا تھا۔ سریندر کو علم ریاضی سے بڑی دلچسپی تھی۔ جلدت وہ ریاضی کے سکوں میں کھو یا کھو یا سا رہتا۔ بچی اس سے پڑھنے کے لئے آتی۔ پڑھانا تو دور کی بات تھی۔ وہ اپنے خیال میں اس قدر منہمک رہتا کہ اسے خبر تک نہیں رہتی کہ بچی کب آئی اور کب گئی۔ اسے نہ کھانے کا ہوش رہتا نہ پہننے کا۔ بڑی دیدی بھی اس گھرانے کی ایک راکھی تھی اور بچی کی بڑی بہن تھی۔ وہ سریندر کا بہت خیال کرتی تھی۔ سریندر اپنی سادگی میں اس سے وہ خدمت لے لیتا جو صرف گھر کی خادماں سے لی جاسکتی تھی۔

سریندر کی سادگی اور بڑی دیدی کی خدمت گزاری کی تہہ میں ایک دلی لگاؤ کام کر رہا تھا۔ ایک ہلاکت خیز حادثے کے تحت وہ اپنے گاؤں واپس آگیا۔ حرف و صوت سے بے نیاز اس کے دل میں بڑی دیدی کے لئے ایک جگہ پیدا ہو گئی تھی جسے اسے خود بھی خبر نہ تھی۔ یہ غیر شعوری میلان تادم آفراس کے ساتھ رہا۔ وہ ایک نارل زمیندار کی طرح زمینداری کے کاموں میں لگ گیا۔ ۱۰ سال گزرتے گئے، اس میں وہ عظیم در آئیں جو عام طور پر زمیندار طبقے میں پیدا ہو جا یا کرتی ہیں۔ سریندر بظاہر اب وہ بچپن کا سادہ اور معصوم سریندر نہ تھا۔

سریندر کے کردار کو تصوراتی (ideal) بنا کر سرت چندر اسے کسی دیوتے کا روپ دے سکے تھے۔ لیکن ان کے سامنے یہ حقیقت تھی کہ ایک خاص معاشرے میں انسانی رویوں میں کس طرح پیچیدگیاں پیدا ہو جا یا کرتی ہیں۔

”پنڈت جی“ میں سرت چندر نے پیسے کا ایک سین جیت کیا ہے۔ گاؤں میں پیسے کی دبا بھوٹ پڑی ہے۔ گاؤں والوں کو نہ تازہ صاف پانی میسر ہے اور نہ دوائیں۔ بچے نوجوان بوڑھے عام طور پر اس کا شکار ہو رہے ہیں۔ بندر ابی ایک شور مچاتا تھا۔ جس کا بچپن محنت اور عسرتوں میں گزرا تھا۔ اتفاق سے وہ اس گاؤں کا زمیندار تھا۔ نہایت ہی بامردت اور خالص۔ اس کا ایک اکلوتا بیٹا تھا۔ دبا بھوٹوں پھیلی جاتی تھی۔ پتہ نہیں کیوں وہ یہ سوچنے لگا تھا کہ اس کا اکلوتا بیٹا اس سے چھن جائے گا۔ بد قسمتی سے اس نے وہ دن بھی دیکھا جبکہ اس کا بیٹا ہیضہ کی لپیٹ میں آگیا۔ جسے وہ کسی طرح بچا نہ سکا۔ بااوقات آنے والی مصیبتیں انسانی لاشعور میں پیچھے ہی سے اپنی جگہ بنالیتی ہیں۔ سرت چندر لاشعور میں اترنا جانتے تھے۔

کشم اور کچھ ناخفہ بھائی بہن تھے جو بچپن ہی میں نیم ہو گئے تھے اور تنگ حالی میں بسر کرتے تھے۔ کچھ ناخفہ عمر میں بڑا اور کم اس کی چھوٹی بہن تھی۔ کچھ سادہ طبیعت کا آدمی تھا۔ اس کی سادگی حاکم کی حد تک پہنچی ہوئی تھی۔ وہ کسی بھی معاملے کو ذرا دیر سے سمجھتا تھا۔ کشم عمر میں چھوٹی تھی لیکن اپنی ذہانت اور common sense کی بنا پر کچھ پر غالب رہتی تھی۔ اور کچھ کو ہر کام اس کے اشارے پر کرنا پڑتا تھا قسمت نے یادری کی کچھ کی شادی ایک ایسے شخص کی بیٹی سے ہو گئی جو خاصی جاگد اچھوڑ کر مرا تھا۔ شادی کے بعد کچھ اپنی سسرال چلا گیا۔ اور وہاں

جامداد اور زمین کا مالک بن گیا۔ ملکیت ہاتھ میں آئی تو بہن کی یاد سے ذہن خالی ہونے لگا۔ اور روز بروز فراموشی کے درجوں میں اضافہ ہوتا گیا۔ دونوں افلاس اور محتاجی کی گود کے پے پے ہونا یہ جاسے تھا کہ عمر بھر ایک دوسرے سے رفاقت کرتے رہتے۔ لیکن بیچ میں ایک آڑ پیدا ہو گئی۔ یعنی جامداد اور زمین کی آڑ۔ اس آڑ میں بھائی بہن کو بھولنے لگا۔ سرت چند رکھنا چاہتے ہیں کہ دولت ایک دیوار ہوتی ہے جو رشتوں کے درمیان بھی حائل ہو جاتی ہے۔ سرت چند کے نادلوں میں ہمیں جو آبادی سانس مہی نظر آتی ہے وہ متوسط طبقہ کے افراد کی آبادی ہے ہمارے ملک کی اکثریت middle اور lower middle کلاس (متوسط اور ادنیٰ طبقہ) پر مشتمل ہے۔ اس طرح موصوف نے اپنے نادلوں میں پورے ملک کی ترجمانی کر دی ہے۔ ان کے نادول طبقاتی اور سماجی کشمکش کے آئینہ دار ہیں ان کے نادلوں اور کہانیوں کا پس منظر اگرچہ بنگال ہے۔ لیکن اس میں پورا ہندستان جھلکتا نظر آتا ہے۔ وہ صرف بنگال ہی کے نہیں بلکہ پورے ہندستان کے ترجمان ہیں۔ ان کے نادلوں میں جذباتیت (Sentimentalism) مٹی ہے۔ بعض نقادوں کا خیال ہے کہ یہی جذباتیت سرت چند کی مقبولیت کا راز ہے۔ مگن ہے ایسا ہی ہو۔ لیکن یہ حقیقت ہے کہ ان کی جذباتیت سلی سلی نہیں بلکہ اس سے بے شمار اصلاحی پہلو ابھرتے ہیں اور سرشت انسانی کے کتے ہی چھپے ہوئے گوشے اجاگر ہو جاتے ہیں۔

ہر عظیم فن کار اپنے آپ کو اپنے فن پاروں میں چھپاتا بھی ہے اور نمایاں بھی کرتا ہے۔ فن پارے کا (impersonal) ہونا۔ اس کی عظمت کی کوئی ٹین جاتا ہے۔ سرت چند کا سونا اگر اس کوئی پرکھا جائے تو یقیناً وہ کھرا نکلے گا۔ سرت چند نے ہمیں فن کے جوش پارے عطا کئے وہ صرف بنگلہ زبان و ادب ہی کی نہیں بلکہ ہندستان کی تمام زبانوں کی قابلِ فخر میراث ہیں۔

پچھلی نس نے فن و ادب کا جو معیار اور سطح پیش کی تھی ہمارا دور اس سے نیچے گر چکا ہے اور گرتا جا رہا ہے۔ اس سبب خواہ کچھ بھی ہو لیکن اتنی بات ضرور ہے کہ ہم اس گداختگی اور سوز نفس سے یکسر محروم ہوتے جا رہے ہیں جس سے اس نے اپنی قدیل روشنی کی تھی۔ فن کی کامیابی کی پہلی اور آخری شرط گداختگی دل ہوا کرتی ہے۔

میں فروغ شمع سخن دور ہے اسد  
پیہے دلِ گداختہ پیدا کرے کوئی

# Saratchandra Chatterji :

## An impression

Abdur Rauf

When an artist having full grasp over the principles and details of art creates something new and fresh, he is supposed to be the interpreter of the greatness of art and as such he himself becomes a great artist. Saratchandra should be considered as one of the great novelists of the world as he discovered, analysed and interpreted the new trends in his contemporary society which were being nourished in the inner depth of human senses.

For the last two hundred years Bengal has been a land of Renaissance, giving birth to a number of political, social and religious movements. From the historical materialist point of view the reason may be traced to the fact that the Dutch, French and the English traders, well-equipped with an up-to-date technology and armed with the ideas of European Renaissance made Bengal the centre of their commercial activities. With a superior commercial intellect they surpassed their Indian counterparts. Commercial stability needed political power. Hence they vied with each other for power. The English won the race and became the rulers of India. Since these foreign traders had the germs of revolutionary ideas, they gained a firm hold on the socio-economic affairs of the country and their sphere of activities extended day by day. There is yet another reason that may be ascribed to this phenomenon. Eighteenth century is the century of sea-routes. The areas connected by sea-routes became more important. In the earlier centuries the areas connected by land-routes had their importance. West Bengal is fortunate enough to have land as well as sea-routes. From here land-routes stretch into the interior of the country and Calcutta Port is connected with the world at large. The evergrowing population of this city (Calcutta) has its link with the port and its industries. Culture, in its manifold colour, grows at a place where working class of people concentrate in an evergrowing number.

The progress of literature and fine arts have their roots in collectivism. This is the reason why Bengal has been on the forefront in so far as the literary and political movements are concerned.

Bankimchandra Chatterji wrote *Durgēśnandini* in 1865 which is the first novel among all the Indian languages. Blank Verse, in its modern sense, was introduced by Madhusudan Dutta

(1824-1873). Bengal had the privilege of introducing the first specimen of blank verse to the rest of India.

It was from the demand of natural circumstances and time that Bengal produced a great novelist of the calibre of Saratchandra.

The secret of Saratchandra's popularity and greatness lies in his friendliness to man. There is no art separate from man. An artist recreates what basically lies in a man. Human consciousness, though limited, stretches far while the sub-conscious is an ocean too deep to be measured. Saratchandra goes into the depth and sends pictures which are the pictures of man.

It is difficult to determine the future of a character. Logic and reasoning do not help much in this regard. By dint of his sensitiveness an artist proceeds along with his creation, that is characters, and the characters reveal their future themselves by their actions. Saratchandra does not introduce his characters, nor does he idealise them. The characters introduce themselves.

Here are some examples from *Baradidi* and *Paṇḍit Maśāi*.

The hero in *Baradidi* was Surēndra, the son of a landlord. He was simple in behaviour and childlike by temperament. He was an M. A., and was brought up in a town. He had a step mother. He did not like his environment. He left his town and came to Calcutta. He was a stranger here. He lived precariously. He strove hard for a job. But it was not easy to get one. At last, he was appointed a residential tutor to a nine-year-old girl. He was a student of Mathematics and always remained absorbed in solving mathematical problems. He paid little care to his young student. Here he came across Baradidi (eldest sister). They were daughters of a landlord. Baradidi loved Surēndra of which he was not aware. Though he was a mere tutor, he was child enough to ask Baradidi to do things which a servant could be asked to do. An accident took him back to his native place. Surēndra, in his subconscious mind had a silent emotional leaning towards Baradidi which he maintained unconsciously till the last breath of his life. He was married to another girl. As the years passed by, Surēndra, being the son of a Zemindar, developed the complexities of a traditional Zemindar. Apparently, he was no more the simple innocent Surēndra.

Here Saratchandra does not idealise the character of Surēndra. He does not paint him as an angel keeping in view the intricacies in human behaviour in a given mode of society.

In *Paṇḍit Maśāi* Saratchandra depicted a scene of the outbreak of cholera. The entire village was in the grip of a severe type of cholera. There was almost a famine of clean water and effective medicines. The villagers—old, young, male and female—were falling victim to the epidemic. Bṛndāban, a member of the lowly placed caste, happened to be the landlord of that village. He was simple and kindhearted. He helped the fellow villagers to the best of his capacity. He had only one son, ten years old. As the cholera spread, a mysterious fear crept into his mind. He thought he might lose his only son. It so happened that the child fell victim to cholera. Bṛndāban found himself helpless. In spite of his best efforts he could not save his son. Sometimes impending calamities have their way into the sub-conscious. Saratchandra knew how to go deep into human sub-consciousness.

Kusum and Kuñjanāth were brother and sister. They lost their parents in their childhood and lived miserably. Kusum was younger than Kuñjanāth. Kusum was of sharp intelligence and Kuñjanāth was dull. He lacked common sense. By her superior intellect Kusum used to rule over Kuñjanāth. Kuñjanāth had to follow the dictates of his younger sister at every step. Fortune smiled. Kuñjanāth was married to the daughter of a widow who owned land and

property. Kunjanāth left his sister and went away to his mother-in-law's place. He became a full-fledged Zemindar. With the passage of time he forgot his sister.

Saratchandra means to say that wealth and property are a barrier that separate the nearest relatives.

We find the middle and the lower middle class breathing in the novels of Saratchandra. The bulk of the Indian population belongs to the middle or the lower middle class. His stories mirror the class conflicts prevailing in our society. Bengal is the background of his novels, but this background unfolding itself embraces the whole of the country. Saratchandra is the spokesman of India.

Some people say that Saratchandra is popular because of his sentimentalism. Of course he is sentimental. But his sentimentalism is indicative of many a social reform and reveals that part of human nature which remains hidden from common sight.

Great artists at the same time exhibit and hide themselves in their masterpieces. Art should be impersonal. Tested on this touchstone, the gold of Saratchandra would be found genuine.

His masterpieces are not only the heritage of the Bengali language but they belong to all the Indian languages.

Our age is falling short of the standard and level of art which the elder generation of artists set before us. Whatever be the reasons, one thing is most obvious—our generation lacks in human sympathy and warmth of breath so lovingly nurtured by our predecessors.

The first and the last condition of the success of art lies in human pathos.

Husnē farōgē sām-ē sōkhān dūr hāi, Āsād

Pahlē dil ē gudakhtā pāidā karē kōi

Far away is the light of the beauty of art, O Asad<sup>1</sup>,

First of all let one have a melting heart.

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<sup>1</sup>Asad is another poetical name of Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib (1797-1869).

# স্মৃতিচারণ

হেমচন্দ্র ঘোষ

সে আজ অনেক দিনের কথা যখন শব্দচন্দ্রের সঙ্গে আমার প্রথম দেখা হয়েছিল। আজ থেকে চৌষড়ি বৎসর পূর্বে ১৯১২ খ্রীষ্টাব্দে। আমি বর্তমানে অতি বৃদ্ধ ও প্রাচীন হয়েছি। এককক্ষ স্থাবর বসনেই তম। শব্দচন্দ্রের সম্বন্ধে অনেক কথা শোনা ছিল। আমি দেশের বন্ধনমুক্তি যজ্ঞে সক্রিয় ব্রহ্মচর্য আন্দোলনের সঙ্গে জড়িত। কায় উপলক্ষে নানা ভাবে বিচিত্র স্থানে আনাগোনা করতেই তম। সেদিন হাওড়া মিউনিসিপালিটি অফিসে আমার এক পরিচিত ব্যক্তি বোম্বে গিয়েছিলেন দবজায় দুকুণ্ডেই একজনকে দেখলাম। যাবা তাঁর সঙ্গে আলাপবত তাহা সবার বখাতে বলায় ইনিই শব্দচন্দ্র। আমি যখন ভিতরে ঢুকছিলাম তিনি বেল বেব হয়ে আসছিলেন। স্বভাবতই দাঁড়িয়ে গেলাম। অন্যকে দেখে জিজ্ঞাসা কবলেন, 'কাকে চাই নাম কি?' নাম বলতেই চিনলেন। আমি প্রথমে মনে মনে অন্যক হলাম। অন্যকে কি কবল চিনলেন। পরে ভেবে গেলাম যে তিনি বিপনী মেতা বিপিনীহারা গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়ের ভাগনে। সুতরাং বিপিনবাবুর নিকট আমার নাম শনে থাকলেন। তিনিও তাই বললেন। বললেন 'হেমচন্দ্র, তোমাকে গানি। বিপিনের নিকট তোমার সম্বন্ধে অনেক কথা শুনো' এই প্রথম সাক্ষাৎ। শব্দচন্দ্র তখন বেঙ্গলে থাকতেন এবং ১৯১২-১৩ একবার দেশে এসেছিলেন। একপলকই তিনি একদৃশে চলে গেলেন। চার বৎসর পরে ১৯১৬ খ্রীষ্টাব্দে শুনলাম তিনি কবে এসেছেন এবং হাওড়াতেই আছেন। তখন নেবা বললাম গিয়ে। প্রণাম কবলাম পায়ে হাত দিয়ে। ঘনিষ্ঠতা বাড়তে লাগল।

প্রথম দিনেই প্রথম পরিচয়ই তিনি আমাকে নিজেই কতে চেনে। আমি তাই দেখাবখাত শব্দচন্দ্র বইনই নয়—শব্দচন্দ্র—আপন জোষ্ঠ্রা ভাড়া নলৈই গ্রাণে বদলান। একপলক বত দিন কত কথা, বত প্রকাশ্য ও নিতৃত আনোচনা, কত পরামর্শ হইল। যতই দিন এগিয়ে য়েতে লাগল, সম্পক ততই নিবিড় ও ঘানষ্ঠ হতে থাকল।

এ আমার একান্ত ব্যক্তিগত ও অশ্রবণ কথা। এই অতি দীর্ঘ জীবনে কত বিড়ম্বনা দেখাব সুযোগ ও সৌভাগ্য হয়েচে। কিন্তু শব্দচন্দ্রের সদায়হাশীল সদয় ভাববাসা বত না নিদর্শন দেখেছি। মুক্ত হয়েছি, অতিভূত হয়েছি সেই ব্যাকুল স্নেহ ভাববাসা নতুন নতুন অভিব্যক্তিতে। অন্যের প্রতি মানুষ্য ভাববাসা যে কত গভীর হতে পারে, কত ব্যাপক হতে পারে, শব্দচন্দ্রের সঙ্গে পরিচিত না হলে তা জানতে পাবতাম না। দেশকে আমবাও ভাববাসা, দেশজন্যের সম্মাননের বন্ধনবাস্য ব্যক্তি হয়ে দেশের নিপীড়িত দরিদ্র ও ভাগ্য মানুষ্য দৃশ্যনাঙ্কনা দেখেই হো আমবা মুক্তিসংগ্রামে ব্যাপিয়ে গিয়েছি। বিস্তৃত এই দুঃখী, নিপীড়িত, কতভাবে লাঞ্ছিত মানুষ্যগণের জন্য শব্দচন্দ্রের কি যে গভীর মমতা, সন্তদয় প্রসন্ন প্রেম ও কুলভাঙ্গা কবণা, তাই সভ্য পরিমাপ কবা আমার অসম্ভব। দেশের সাধারণ মানুষ্যের জন্য এমন অফুৎ প্রেমভালবাসা অন্যত্র দুর্লভ না হলেও হতে পারে। তবে ভাববাস্য



বিপ্লবীপন্থার সঙ্গে যুক্ত ভারতীয় বিপ্লবীদের জন্য তাঁর প্রেমভালবাসা, অহেতুকী কবুলা এবং তাদের জন্য গভীর বেদনাবোধ ও দবদ—এব যেন আর সীমা ছিল না। আমি যে যুগের কথা বলছি সেটা অতীত কাল এবং বিস্মৃত যুগ। আজ তা ধারণাবণ্ড অতীত। তখন বিপ্লবপন্থা এবং ঐ পথের পণিকমাগ্রই ষড়্কাব ও অবজ্ঞার পাত্র। অবহেলিত নির্মিত, বিভীষণ বৈল পবিগণিত।

এই সব দুঃসাহসী ভয় ভাবনাধীন মৃত্যুপাগল দুঃখ-তপস্যা-ব্রতগারী মানুষগুলি তাঁকে গভীরভাবে আকর্ষণ করত। তাদের নানান কথা শনে তিনি 'এই অস্বাভাবিক কথ' জেনে, তাদের অব্যক্ত সাহায্য করে তিনি অপরিমেয় আনন্দবোধ করতেন। বহুতঃ তিনি প্রেম সাহায্য করত। তাঁর যেন সবদা উন্মত্ত হয়েই থাকতেন। তিনি এদের সঙ্গে সত্যকাবে এক বিশেষ ধরনের আত্মীয়তা থাকাই বাস্তবিক। তাই তিনি এই আত্মীয়তাবশতঃই তিনি বেণু' প্রতিষ্ঠার আবেদনে এমন উদারভাবে সাড়া দিয়েছিলেন। বেণু' গঠন প্রতিষ্ঠা ও উদ্ভূত একটা টান এবং বিশেষ ধরনের অপভ্রংশ যেন ছিল। 'বেণু'কে তিনি মাত্র বিপ্লবী ও তাত্ত্বিকের 'হৃদয়' প্রতিষ্ঠা করেই মনে করতেন না তাঁর নিজস্ব আপন অন্তরের এক নীচের নিভৃত সম্ভাব বিশেষ প্রকাশের বাহক মনে গণ্য করতেন। বেণু'র সূত্র যেন তাইই মনোনিবেশ সুব, 'বেণু'র ভাষা যেন তাঁরই ভাষা। বেণু'কে সে ভাবে লেখা দিয়ে পবামর্গ দিয়ে, সাংগঠনিক সাহায্য করে গিয়েছেন সেই সন্ধিক্ষণে সেটা ভাবলে বিস্মিত হতে হয়। এবিষয় সেদিন 'অনেকের মনেই উদয় হয়েছিল। এদের মধ্যে প্রতিষ্ঠার পবিচালক এবং প্রকাশক প্রকাশ্যেই শবৎচন্দ্রকে জিজ্ঞাসাও করেছিলেন, 'বেণু' থেকে তিনি কত টাকা পান। এটা জানতেন না বরংতে পাবতেন না যে বেণু থেকে টাকা নেওয়া তো দুঃখের কথা, সম্ভব হলে শবৎচন্দ্র দুহাত ভরে বেণু'কে অর্থ সাহায্য করতেন।

এখা সবাই জানা যে শবৎচন্দ্রের বিপ্লবাস উপন্যাস 'বেণু'তেই সাংগঠনিকভাবে প্রথম প্রকাশিত হতে আবশ্য করে। বাস্তবিক 'বেণু'র বস্তু বৃদ্ধ হয়। তার প্রকাশ শুরু হয়ে গেল। 'বিপ্লবাস' উপন্যাসটির ছক যেকোনভাবে তিনি পবিচালনা করেছিলেন, সেভাবে তিনি শেষ করতে পারলেন না বৈল শবৎচন্দ্রের মনে ক্ষোভ ও দুঃখ বাধ হয়েছিল। বেণু-সম্পাদক শ্রীমান ভূপেন্দ্রকিশোর বসন্ত বাসন্তী তিনি এই দুঃখের কথা জানিয়েছিলেন। নানা কথা প্রসঙ্গে আমার নিবটও বহুবার তিনি এই দুঃখের কথা বলেছেন।

শবৎচন্দ্র মানবদবদী এ কথা স্বীকারী। কিছু এ অতিরিক্ত আর এটা সত্য আছে। মানবদবদী শবৎচন্দ্রের অপরিমেয় স্নেহ ও ভালবাসা ছিল দেশের জন্য সেই সব লোকের জন্য যারা প্রত্যাশার অগ্নিগোলা সত্য বৈল সবই সর্বপ্রকার অত্যাচার ও উৎপীড়নের বিরুদ্ধ এবং প্রয়োজনে নিজ আঁতর বিসর্জন দিয়েও অন্যায় অত্যাচারের বিরুদ্ধে মাথা তুলে দাত। বিপ্লবী দলের প্রতি তাঁর মাতৃস্নেহ ও মাতা ও ভালবাসার জন্য শবৎচন্দ্র বিপ্লবীদের এত প্রিয় এত পুণ্যীয় ছিলেন। তিনি তাদের একান্ত আপনজন। আত্মীয় তিনি এই অজ্ঞাত অবহেলিত লক্ষ্মীছাড়া তৃণসমাজকে অভিনন্দন জানিয়েছেন।

এবার শবৎচন্দ্রের সঙ্গে আমার নিজের ব্যক্তিগত ঘনিষ্ঠতার কয়েকটা কথা বলি।

বিপ্লবী নিকুঞ্জ সেনের বকসব পব দেউলি গ্রন্থের ডুমিকা লিখতে গিয়ে ডঃ সুযোগ চন্দ্র সেনগুপ্ত বলেছেন : শবৎচন্দ্র আমাকে বলেছিলেন 'পথের দাবী'-র মালমশলা তিনি সংগ্রহ করিয়াছিলেন বিপ্লবী হেমচন্দ্র ঘোষের সঙ্গে আলাপ-আলোচনা করিয়া।' শবৎচন্দ্র 'পথের দাবী' প্রসঙ্গে সুবোধবাবুর কাছে আমার সন্নিবেশ যা বলেছিলেন, তিনি তত্বেই একথা লিখেছেন। বাস্তবিক শবৎচন্দ্র 'পথের দাবী' লেখার সময় সঙ্গে আমার এ নিসে অনেক দিন অনেক আলোচনা করেছেন।

দাদা বাজেশিবপুরে থাকাকালে আমি যখনই জেলের বাইরে থাকতাম তখনই তাঁর কাছে যেতাম। তাঁর সামন্তানেডের বাড়িতেও কয়েকবার গিয়েছি।

দাদা একবার আমাকে বলেছিলেন : 'হেম, আমার বিভলবাবটা তুমি নিয়ে যাও। ওটা তোমার কাছে থাক। তোমাদের বাড়ি লাগবে।'

আমি উত্তরে বলেছিলাম : 'দাদা, আমাদের বিভলবাব আছে। আমাদের অভাব হচ্ছে গুলি। কিছু গুলি দিন।'

আমার এই কথা শুনে তিনি তখনই তাঁর বাড়িতে ২৩ গুলি ছিল সবই দিয়েছিলেন। এবপব তাঁর কাছে থেকে এমনি আরও কয়েকবার গুলি এনেছি। এনে, আমাদের বি ভি দলের বন্দীদের মধ্যে ভাগ করে দিয়েছি। তাঁর দেওয়া গুলিতেও আমরা ইংরাজ মেরেছি।

বিনয়, বাদল ও দীনেশের রাইটাস' বিল্ডিংসে যুদ্ধ এবং মেদিনীপুরের জেলা শাসক পেডিকে নিধনের পর দাদা একদিন আমাকে বলেছিলেন : 'হেম, তোমার দলকে আমি দশ হাজার টাকা দিচ্ছি, নাও।'

আমি তখন তাঁকে বলেছিলাম : 'দাদা, টাকা আমাদের কি হবে? টাকার দরকার হলে তো আমরা রাজনৈতিক ডাকাতিই করতে পারতাম। কিন্তু সেটা আমাদের নীতি নয়। আমরা পদস্থ রাজকর্মচারি ইংরাজ মারি এবং নিজেরা মরি। আমাদের এই সোজাসুজি ইংরাজ নিধনের ব্যাপারে টাকার তেমন দরকার হয়না। যেটুকু হয়, তা আমরা নিজেরাই চালিয়ে নিই। আমরা টাকা চাইনা। আমরা চাই আপনার আশীর্বাদ।' দাদা আশীর্বাদ জানিয়েছিলেন।

আমার তথা আমাদের বি ভি দলের প্রতি ছিল এমনি অকৃত্রিম স্নেহ। আজ দাদার এই জন্মশতবার্ষিকীতে আমি তাঁর উদ্দেশ্যে আমার সশ্রদ্ধ প্রণাম জানাই।

# Saratchandra :

## Reminiscences

Hemchandra Ghosh

My first encounter with Saratchandra took place long long ago. It was about sixty four years ago from today in the year 1912. Now I am a very old and ancient man. In fact I may be called an invalid. I had already learnt enough about him. Being actively connected with the revolutionary movement for the emancipation of the country, I had to visit different places in various ways as dictated by the nature of my work. One day I went to the Municipality Office in Howrah in search of an acquaintance of mine. On entering the room I saw a man. I came to identify him as Saratchandra from the presence of all those persons who were busy conversing with him. He was coming out of the room as I was entering it. Naturally, I halted. On seeing me, he queried : 'Whom do you want to see ? What's your name ?' He recognised me instantly as I told him my name. I was astonished at first. How did he come to know me ? On reflection I realised that he happened to be the nephew of the revolutionary Bipin Babu and might have heard my name from him. He also said so. 'Hemchandra, I know you', said he, 'I've learnt a lot about you from Bipin.' This was my first meeting with him. Saratchandra lived then in Rangoon and he came once to the country in 1912. Immediately after this he went back to Burma. Four years later in 1916 I came to know of his home-coming. I also learnt that he was staying in Howrah. I then went to meet him. I made my obeisance by touching his feet with my hand. From then on the intimacy between us two began to grow ever more.

In his introduction on the very first day he drew me close to his heart. I took him not merely as the India renowned Saratchandra but also as my elder brother, as 'Sarat-da'. From then onwards, how many talks we had, how many covert and open discussions, and how many deliberations ! As days wore on, my relationship with him began to grow more cordial than before.

This is part of my most private and sentimental view that in the long span of my life I have had the good fortune and opportunity of having observed so very many things. I have seen many examples of the display of love on the part of the ever-loving Saratchandra. But I am at once enchanted and overwhelmed with the newer and newer expressions of his spontaneous love and tenderness. Had I not been introduced to him, I could not have known how profound

and pervasive might be the love of one man for his fellowman. We also did love the country. Being touched to the quick by the painful slavery of Mother India and having witnessed the poor, unfortunate and suffering countrymen's sorrows and humiliations, we had thrown ourselves into the vortex of the freedom movement. It is not possible now on my part to make an accurate assessment of the extent of his heartfelt love and compassion for these sad, tortured and humiliated people. Such boundless love for the common man may in some cases be rare elsewhere. There was no limit to his unconditional mercy and affection for the Indian revolutionaries connected with India's freedom struggle and his awareness and understanding of their agony. The age I write of is past and lost in oblivion. It is beyond human imagination to comprehend it. Both the path to revolution and the revolutionary were at that time objects of contempt and ridicule. A revolutionary was neglected and condemned as terrible.

These daring youths who were free from fear and worries and were eager to sacrifice themselves for their cause and who had embraced the sorrows and sufferings of life could attract him so overwhelmingly. He felt an immense joy when he came to know of their dangers, difficulties and self-immolations and when he could offer them his unstinted help. Verily, he was earnest enough to help them. He had a genuine empathy for them in his heart of hearts. He responded so magnanimously to the call of the journal *Benu* because of his sincere affiliation with it. He had a strange fascination for it—almost a kind of paternal love. He never considered *Benu* as mere hot juvenile stuff. But he valued it as a special medium for the flowering of the inmost longings of his heart. The symphony of *Benu* was the symphony of his heart-strings ; its language was his real voice. It was amazing to think even in that twilight of revolution how he helped it entirely with his own contributions and counsel. It was food for thought for many. Even the publishers and printers of many journals openly asked Saratchandra how much money he had received from *Benu*. They could neither know nor understand that he, far from taking any financial help from *Benu*, even went so far as to finance it generously.

It is known to all that Saratchandra's novel *Bipradās* first began to be published in serial form. The voice of *Benu* was gagged on account of the imperial wrath. Its publication was stopped. He felt deep sorrow and regret, because the manner in which he had to conduct the ending of the novel was quite contrary to his original contemplation. He even informed the editor of *Benu*, Sriman Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Roy, of his sorrow. He told me many times of his agony in different parleys.

It is universally admitted that Saratchandra had a compassionate soul. But behind this there is another reality. The humanist Saratchandra had an unfathomable love and affection for his countrymen, who brooked the insolence of everybody, stood up erect against all kinds of torture and oppression at all places, and protested, by their necessary acts of self-annihilation, against any unjust tyranny. He was so dear and venerable among the revolutionaries because of his motherly love and affection for the revolutionary organisations. He was their closest associate. All his life he had expressed his feelings of optimism for these unknown, neglected and unfortunate young men.

Now I shall attempt to say a few words about the nature of my intimacy with Saratchandra. In writing a foreword to the revolutionary Nikunja Sen's *Baxār par Deuli*, Dr. Subodhchandra Sengupta has observed : "Saratchandra told me that he collected the material of his novel *Pathēr Dābī* after having discussions with the revolutionary Hemchandra Ghosh." Subodh Babu has written exactly what Saratchandra had told him about me in connection with *Pathēr Dābī*. In fact, Saratchandra had several discussions with me on this subject on many occasions at the time of his writing *Pathēr Dābī*.

When *dada* ('Sarat-da') was compelled by his work to stay at Sibpur, I used to visit him whenever I stayed outside the jail. On a number of occasions I went to his house at Samtaber.

*Dada* once told me : 'Hem, take away my revolver. Let it remain with you. It'll be of help to you.'

I replied 'Dada, we've got our revolvers. But we're in need of bullets. Please give us some bullets.'

He heard these words of mine and gave away all the bullets which he had in his possession. After this incident I brought bullets from him several times and divided them among the workers in our B.V.<sup>1</sup> group. We shot dead many Englishmen with his own bullets.

After the fight of Binay, Badal and Dinesh in the Writers' Buildings and the killing of Mr. Peddy, the District Magistrate of Midnapore, *dada* once told me : 'Hem, I wish to give ten thousand rupees to your organisation. Please take it.'

I then told him : 'Dada, what shall we do with money ? If we are in need of money we can then commit political dacoity. But that's not our ideology. We do kill all Englishmen who happen to be high officials in His Majesty's Service. And we also die in the process. We don't need money in the outright killing of Englishmen. We can maintain ourselves with the meagre amount that we need. We don't want money. We only want your benedictions.' *Dada* gave us his blessings.

He had the most unaffected love for me, nay, for the whole of our B. V. group. Today I pay my deepest respects to our *dada* on the occasion of his birth centennial.

*Translated by Ranjit Mitra*

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<sup>1</sup> Bengal Volunteers, a revolutionary organisation of the pre-independence days.

# শরণ মূল্যায়ন

শিবদাস ঘোষ

শরণসাহিত্য অথবা যে কোন সাহিত্যিকের চিন্তাভাবনা বা তাঁর সাহিত্য বিচার করতে গেলে যে সময়ে বা সমাজ প্রগতির ইতিহাসের যে বিশেষ স্তরে সেই সাহিত্যিকের অভ্যুত্থান বা তাঁর সাহিত্য সৃষ্টি হয়েছে, সেই স্তরটি, সেই সময় এবং সমাজপরিবেশটি আমাদের মনে রাখতে হবে। স্থান-কাল নিরপেক্ষভাবে কোন সাহিত্যিকের চিন্তাভাবনা বা জীবনদর্শনের আলোচনা বা মূল্যায়ন করতে গেলে আমরা ভুল করব। কারণ, মানুষের চিন্তাভাবনা এবং ভাবজগৎ স্থান-কাল-পরিবেশের সীমার দ্বারা নিয়ন্ত্রিত। মানুষের চিন্তা করবার যেমন অক্ষরসমূহ এবং অশেষ শক্তি রয়েছে, মানুষের ক্ষমতার যেমন সীমা-পরিসীমা নেই, তেমনই এই 'সীমা-পরিসীমা নেই', 'অশেষ ক্ষমতা'—এই জিনিসগুলোও বস্তু-সীমা (material condition) বা পরিবেশ, অর্থাৎ স্থান-কাল-পাত্র দ্বারা নিয়ন্ত্রিত বা সীমিত। কোন মানুষের চিন্তার সীমা, তিনি যত বড় ক্ষমতাবান মানুষই হোন না কেন, একে ডিঙিয়ে যেতে পারে না। পারেনা ব'লেই তাঁর নিজের যুগে বৃদ্ধ অতবড় একজন চিন্তাশীল মানুষ হওয়া সত্ত্বেও কিন্তু 'খিওর অভ রিলেটিভিটি' আবিষ্কার করা তাঁর পক্ষে সম্ভব হয়নি। অথবা আজকের দিনে আমরা সাধারণ মানুষেরা পর্যন্ত আধুনিক সভ্যজগতের গণতান্ত্রিক শিক্ষার শিক্ষিত হয়ে গণতান্ত্রিক ধ্যানধারণা, মানবতাবাদ, নারীস্বাধীনতা বা নারীর মূল্যবোধ ইত্যাদি সম্পর্কে যে সমস্ত চিন্তাভাবনাকে লালনপালন করি, তদানীন্তন সময়ে বিশ্বায়কর প্রতিভার অধিকারী হওয়া সত্ত্বেও বুদ্ধের মত মানুষের পক্ষে কিন্তু এইসব ধ্যানধারণার জন্ম দেওয়া সম্ভব হয়নি। এটা এই কারণে নয় যে, পরবর্তীকালে খ্রীষ্ট এইসব আবিষ্কার করেছেন বা এইসব ভাবনাধারণাগুলিকে জন্ম দিয়েছেন তাঁরা সবাই বুদ্ধ-শঙ্করাচার্য-মহম্মদ-বীশু এ'দের থেকে চিন্তাভাবনার বা প্রতিভায় অনেক বড়। এর দ্বারা আমি যে কথাটা বোঝাতে চাইছি তা হ'ল, সমস্ত চিন্তাভাবনা আসার আগেই সমাজ অভ্যন্তরে মানুষের মননশীলতার বিকাশের 'ইনট্রোডিসেণ্ট' বা উপাদানগুলোর সৃষ্টি হয় বা 'মেটিরিয়াল কন্ডিশন'টা আগে থেকেই তৈরী হয়। অতীত জবুরী এই কথাটা অনেকেরই সাহিত্যবিচার বা মনীষীদের মূল্যায়নের ক্ষেত্রে মনে রাখেন না। আর মনে রাখেন না ব'লেই তাঁরা সব অস্বস্ত অস্বস্ত সিদ্ধান্ত করেন। প্রত্যেক মানুষ, তিনি যত বড় মানুষই হোন না কেন, তাঁর চিন্তা এবং প্রতিভা যে 'মেটিরিয়াল কন্ডিশন' -এর সীমার দ্বারা সীমিত, তাকে তাঁর পক্ষে অতিক্রম ক'রে যাওয়া সম্ভব নয়, এই কথাটা বৃথতে পারলে তবেই আমরা স্থান-কাল-পরিবেশের মধ্যে মনীষীদের স্বার্থ মূল্যায়ন বা বিচার করতে পারব। এবং স্থান-কাল-পরিবেশের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে যে মানুষটির ভাবনাধারণা, ক্রিয়াকর্মকে আমরা বিচার করছি—ঠিক সেই সময়ের সমাজ-অগ্রগতি এবং প্রগতির আন্দোলনের দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে তা কতটা প্রগতিশীল বা প্রতিক্রিয়াশীল, অথবা তার মধ্যে দিয়ে ঠিক কি জাতের ভাবনাচিন্তা, রসোপলব্ধি, সংস্কৃতির মান প্রতিফলিত হয়েছে, তা সমাজকে কতটা এগুতে সাহায্য করেছে, যদি প্রতিক্রিয়াশীল হয়ে থাকে তবে তা কতটা প্রতিক্রিয়াশীল—এই প্রশ্নগুলোও তখন আমরা বিচার করতে সক্ষম হব। তা নাহ'লে আমরা ধরে নিই যে, মানুষের মূল্যবোধ এবং চিন্তাভাবনার কতগুলি মৌলিক দিক আছে যা স্থান-কালের সীমার দ্বারা বা 'মেটিরিয়াল কন্ডিশন' -এর দ্বারা নিয়ন্ত্রিত

নয়, যা স্থান-কালের উর্ধ্বে শাস্ত । এইবকম ধারণাকে আমি অবৈজ্ঞানিক এবং ভ্রান্ত ধারণা বলে মনে করি । এ শূন্য ভ্রান্ত ধারণাই নয়, অত্যন্ত ক্ষতিকারকও বটে । কারণ, এইরকম ধারণা চিন্তার অগ্রগতির ক্ষেত্রে বাধার সৃষ্টি করে—সত্যকে বোঝার ক্ষেত্রে বিপরীত সৃষ্টি করে । এই বক্তব্যকে ধারা অস্বীকার করবেন, আমার এই প্রশ্নটির জবাব তাঁদের দিতে হবে যে, বুদ্ধের জ্ঞানবুদ্ধি আইনস্টাইনের চেয়ে কম থাকার জন্যই কি তাঁর পক্ষে 'খিওঁর অভ রিলেটিভিটি' বা 'ইলেক্ট্রোম্যাগনেটিক ফীল্ড' সংক্রান্ত নানা তত্ত্ব আবিষ্কার করা সম্ভব হয়নি ? অথবা, ইউক্লিডের মানবতাবাদীরা, ধারা গণতান্ত্রিক চিন্তাচেতনার উদ্গাতা, বা কার্ল মার্ক্স যিনি অধিকতর উন্নত চিন্তা অর্থে বৈজ্ঞানিক সমাজতন্ত্রের উদ্গাতা, তাঁরা কি সব বুদ্ধ, শংকরাচার্য, স্ক্রেটিসের মত মানুষদের চেয়ে অনেক বেশী প্রতিভাবান ছিলেন বলেই এগুলো করতে পেরেছেন ? এই ধরনের চিন্তাব সাথে আমি একেবারেই একমত নই । আমি মনে করি, বিভিন্ন যুগের চিন্তনায়করা তাঁদের নিজের নিজের যুগের শ্রেষ্ঠ চিন্তনায়ক হওয়া সত্ত্বেও তাঁরা যুগের সীমা, স্থান-কাল-পরিবেশের সীমা অতিক্রম করতে পাবেন নি । একজন ব্যক্তির ক্ষমতা এবং প্রতিভা উচ্চমানের সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ স্তরে থাকলেও সেই সময়ে ঐ চিন্তা তাঁর মধ্যে আসা সম্ভব ছিলনা । তাই আগের যুগে কোপারনিকাস প্রকৃতিবিজ্ঞান ( natural science ) সম্পর্কে যে ধ্যানধারণা গড়ে তুলেছিলেন, সেই তত্ত্ব আধারের উপরেই নিউটনের মত বিজ্ঞানীর আবির্ভাব ঘটেছে । আমার 'নিউটনিয়ান মেকানিক্স'-এর জরি এবং বুনিয়াদ হৈবী হবার পরেই আইনস্টাইনের মত 'জিনিয়াস'র বিকাশ সম্ভব হয়েছে ।

তাই সাহিত্যেও চিরন্তন বা সর্বকালের জন্য কোন চিন্তাভাবনা, রীতিনীতি ও সাংস্কৃতিক কাঠামো মানুষকে পথ দেখাতে পারেনা । একটা বিশেষ শ্রব বা বড় জোর কতকগুলো শ্রবকে ব্যাপ্ত ক'বে একটা বিশেষ যুগের ভাবনাধারণা মানুষকে খানিকটা দূর পর্যন্ত এগিয়ে দেয় । তারপর নতুন পরিবেশে, নতুন সমস্যার সামনে পড়ে পুরাণে সেই ভাবনাধারণা—যা একদিন সমাজের প্রগতি এবং অগ্রগতির ক্ষেত্রে, মানুষের উন্নতি, কল্যাণ ও বিকাশের ব্যাপারে সাহায্য করেছিল—তা অকার্যকরী হয়ে যায়, পিছিয়ে-পড়া ভাবনাচিন্তায় পর্দাষিত হয়ে যায় । সেই একই ধ্যানধারণা নতুন নতুন সমস্যার উপরে আলোকপাত করার পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে অকার্যকরী, অসম্পূর্ণ এবং অসত্য হয়ে যায় । তখন নতুন পরিবেশে মানুষের এবং সমাজের নতুন প্রয়োজনে অতীতের ভাবধারণার সাথে বিরোধের মধ্য দিয়ে একটা সম্পূর্ণ নতুন আদর্শগত পরিমণ্ডল ( ideological category ) গড়ে ওঠে । যদিও অতীতের সর্বোচ্চ এবং সর্বোত্তম ধ্যানধারণাগুলোর শক্ত ভিতের উপরেই এই সম্পূর্ণ নতুন ভাবধারা গড়ে উঠে, তাহ'লেও অতীতের সংগে এই নতুন ভাবধারণা ঐতিহাসিক ধারাবাহিকতার মধ্যেও একটা ছেদ ( break ) রয়েছে । এইভাবেই ব্রুচিসংস্কৃতিগত কাঠামো, চিন্তাভাবনা, নীতিমূলিকতা ও মূল্যবোধ সম্পর্কিত ধারণাগুলো অতীত যুগ থেকে বারবার নিত্য নতুন রূপে পরিবর্তিত হয়ে পাণ্টে গিয়েছে । ফলে, কোন সত্যই শাস্ত বা চিরন্তন সত্য নয় । সত্য মাত্রই বিশেষ সত্য, আপেক্ষিক সত্য । এইজন্যই সত্য ডিসিসিড্—অমোঘ ও কার্যকরী । সত্য ঘটনাকে প্রভাবিত করে । চিরন্তন সত্যের ধারণা বেহেতু অবাস্তব, তাই বেশীর ভাগ সময়েই তা মানুষকে কর্মক্ষেত্রে বাস্তবানুগ দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী গ্রহণ করতে অক্ষম করে তোলে ।

ফলে, শরৎসাহিত্য বিচারের ক্ষেত্রে আমাদের মনে রাখতে হবে যে, আমরা আজকের দিনে যে সব চিন্তাভাবনা বা আদর্শকে সবচেয়ে উন্নত বলে মনে করি, ঠিক সেই কথাগুলোই শরৎচন্দ্র তাঁর সময়ে বলেছেন কিনা, আর যদি না বলে থাকেন তবে তিনি প্রতিক্রিয়াশীল হয়ে গেলেন—এই ধরনের বিচার আসলে কোন বিচারই নয় । এইভাবে ধারা বিচার করেন তাঁরা বুঝতে পারেন না যে, শরৎচন্দ্র তাঁর সমসাময়িককালে সাহিত্যের মাধ্যমে যে জীবনদর্শন, চিন্তাভাবনা, সংস্কৃতি ও ব্রুচিসংস্কৃতি প্রতিফলিত করেছিলেন সেটা তখনকার দিনে আমাদের দেশের প্রগতিশীল আন্দোলন এবং বিপ্লবী আন্দোলনের পরিপূরক ছিল কিনা—এটাই মূল বিচার্য বিষয় । আজকের দিনের বিপ্লবী আন্দোলন তদানীন্তনকালের বিপ্লবী আন্দোলন থেকে আদর্শের দিক থেকে এবং প্রকৃতিগত, সংগঠনগত দিক থেকে তো পাণ্টে গিয়েছেই, এমনকি বিপ্লব করার মানুষগুলো পর্যন্ত পাণ্টে গিয়েছে । ফলে, আজকের দিনে প্রগতি ও বিপ্লবের প্রয়োজনে যে চিন্তাভাবনাগুলো আমাদের কাছে সবচেয়ে অগ্রসর বলে মনে হচ্ছে, তার মাপকাঠিতে শরৎচন্দ্রের কোন চিন্তা ততটা অগ্রসর মনে না হ'লেই তা প্রতিক্রিয়াশীল এবং ভ্রান্ত—একথা বলা চলে না । এইভাবে কাউকেই মূল্যায়ন করা যাবে না । তাহ'লে রবীন্দ্রনাথ, শেক্সপীয়ার, শরৎচন্দ্র থেকে শুরু করে ওল্ডশন, স্ক্রেটিস্, বুদ্ধ পর্যন্ত কারোরই যথার্থ মূল্যায়ন হবে না । আমরা শূন্য আজ বেটাকে ঠিক বলে মনে করি তার পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে সমস্ত অতীতটাকেই ভ্রান্ত বলে ধরব । এর একটাই মানে দাঁড়াবে, তা হ'ল আমরা ছিমমূল ।

.....তাহলে এখন বিচার্য বিষয় হ'ল, শরৎচন্দ্রের সময়টা কি ছিল ? শরৎচন্দ্রের সময়টা হচ্ছে ভারতবর্ষের রেনেসাঁ আন্দোলনের সময়, সাম্রাজ্যবাদবিরোধী স্বাধীনতা আন্দোলনের উত্তাল জোয়ারের সময় । রাজা রামমোহন রায় থেকেই এদেশের রেনেসাঁ আন্দোলনের

শুরু হল। ইউরোপের রুজোলা মানবতাবাদী ধ্যানধারণা ও চিন্তাভাবনাবলিকে ধর্মের মূল সুরটির সঙ্গে মিলিয়ে ধর্মীয় সংস্কারের পথেই তিনি এদেশে রেনেশী আন্দোলনের জন্ম দেন। ফলে, এদেশের রেনেশী আন্দোলন ধর্মীয় সংস্কারের (religious reformation) পথ ধরে ধীরে ধীরে এগোতে থাকে। পরবর্তীকালে বিদ্যাসাগর মশাইয়ের অভ্যুত্থান রেনেশী আন্দোলনে একটি অকৃতপূর্ব ঘটনা এবং যতদূর মনে হয় বিদ্যাসাগর মশাই-ই প্রথম ব্যক্তি যিনি ধর্মীয় সংস্কারের পথে রেনেশী আন্দোলনের মধ্যে একটা ছেদ (break) ঘটালেন। তিনিই প্রথম এদেশে যতদূর সম্ভব মানবতাবাদী আন্দোলনকে ইতিহাস, বিজ্ঞান ও যুক্তির শক্ত ভিতের ওপর দাঁড় করাতে চাইলেন। ...বিদ্যাসাগরকে এদেশের মানুষ বড় মানুষ বলে জানে, শ্রদ্ধা করে। কিন্তু, তাঁকে বুঝছে কয় জন? আমাদের দেশের বেশীর ভাগ মানুষ বিদ্যাসাগর মশাইয়ের হাঁটুর উপর কাপড় পরা, মাথায় টিকি রাখা দেখেই তাঁকে একজন নৈতিক ব্রাহ্মণ বলেই ভাবেন। একথা ঠিক, বাইরে তাঁর শাস্ত্রকারের মত এবং নৈতিক ব্রাহ্মণের মত বেশি ছিল। কিন্তু ভিতরে তিনি ছিলেন তদানীন্তন ভারতীয় সমাজপরিবেশে একজন খাঁটি হিউম্যানিস্ট। তিনি ভারতীয় সভ্যতার সাথে পাশ্চাত্য বিজ্ঞান সভ্যতার একটা যুক্তিভিত্তিক সংযোগ সাধন করতে চেয়েছিলেন। তাই তাঁর ব্যক্তিত্ব ছিল, ছাত্রদের ইংরাজী শেখাও, 'মিল'-এর লজিক পড়াও। সংস্কৃত শিখিয়ে কুজ হ'য়ে যাওয়া এই জাতির মেবুদু খাড়া করা যাবে না। এই জাতির মেবুদু খাড়া করতে হ'লে বিশ্বের জ্ঞানবিজ্ঞানের সঙ্গে তাকে পরিচিত হবার সুযোগ দিতে হবে। আর ইংরাজী শিখলে দেশের যুবকরা তার মাধ্যমে ইতিহাস, লজিক ও আধুনিক বৈজ্ঞানিক চিন্তাভাবনার সাথে পরিচিত হবে, ইউরোপের বস্তুবাদী দর্শনের সঙ্গে পরিচিত হবে। তাই তিনি ব্যালেন্টাইনের মতবে বিবুদ্ধতা ক'রে বলেছিলেন, আমাদের দেশের সাংখ্য ও বেদান্ত যেমন ব্রাহ্ম দর্শন, তেমনি ইউরোপের বার্কলের দর্শনের মধ্য দিয়েও ঐ একই ব্রাহ্ম ধারণা প্রতীকিত। ...আমাদের দেশের মানুষকে এইসব ব্রাহ্ম দর্শনের প্রভাব থেকে মুক্ত করার জন্য ইউরোপের জ্ঞানবিজ্ঞান ও বস্তুবাদী দর্শনের সঙ্গে পরিচিত হ'তে হবে। তবেই দেশের মানুষ বস্তুজগৎকে খুঁটিয়ে খুঁটিয়ে জেনে সত্যোপলব্ধি করতে এবং তার উপরে মানুষের নতুন জীবনবেদ বা মূল্যবোধ খাড়া করতে সক্ষম হবে। তাই তিনি এইসব অসার অধ্যাবাদী ও ভাববাদী দর্শন ছাত্রদের পড়াবার ক্ষেত্রে বিবুদ্ধতা করেছিলেন। ...তাঁর শিক্ষাসংক্রান্ত দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী বিচার করলে অতি সহজেই ধরা পড়বে যে, ধর্মীয় সংস্কারের পথে আমাদের দেশে রামমোহন রায়ের সময় থেকে যে রেনেশী আন্দোলন শুরু হ'ল, বিদ্যাসাগর মশাই ছিলেন সেই ধারার মধ্যে একটা বলিষ্ঠ ছেদ। তিনি মানবতাবাদী আন্দোলনকে তদানীন্তন পরিবেশে যতদূর সম্ভব ধর্মীয় বিচারবুদ্ধি ও প্রভাব থেকে মুক্ত করতে চেয়েছিলেন। এ সভ্যতার সমস্ত জীবনব্যবস্থার কাব্যকলাপ, আচার-আচরণ, কথাবার্তার মধ্য দিয়েই নিঃসন্দেহে প্রমাণিত হয়।

...বিদ্যাসাগর মশাইয়ের ভূমিকা বাদ দিলে এবং বিদ্যাসাগর মশাইয়ের যুগটা পার হ'য়ে এসে আমাদের দেশের রেনেশী আন্দোলন পুনরায় ধর্মীয় সংস্কারের (religious reformation) পথ ধরেই এগোতে থাকল। ...ব্রাহ্মধর্মের প্রবল জোয়ার সৃষ্টি হ'ল হিন্দুসমাজকে সংস্কার ক'রে তাকে দেখুটুটি মুক্ত করার জন্য। ...অপরদিকে হিন্দুধর্মের পুনরুজ্জীবনের (revivalism) তুমুল আন্দোলন শুরু হ'ল। হিন্দুধর্মীয় ঐতিহ্যের ধারাবাহিকতার ভিত্তিতেই হিন্দুসমাজকে জাতপাত, কলুষতা থেকে মুক্ত করার জন্য হিন্দুধর্মসংস্কারকরা এলেন। এবং এই পর্বেই রামকৃষ্ণের আবির্ভাব। ...বিবেকানন্দ এই হিন্দু পুনরুজ্জীবনবাদী আন্দোলনের একটি বিশালকর সৃষ্টি। তিনি রেনেশী আন্দোলনকে শুধু ধর্মীয় সংস্কারের (religious reformation) গম্ভীর মধ্যেই সীমাবদ্ধ রাখলেন না। তিনি উপাসনা এবং সাধনার পরিবর্তে কর্মযোগের ওপর জোর দিলেন এবং সারা দেশে এক প্রবল জাতাভিমান ও দেশাত্মবোধের জন্ম দিলেন। ...তিনি যে জাতাভিমান ও দেশাত্মবোধের জন্ম দিলেন, তা দিলেন বেদান্তদর্শন ও ভারতীয় অতীত আধ্যাত্মিক গর্বের (spiritual pride) ভিত্তিতে। ...অনেকটা এই কারণেই পরবর্তীকালে যে দেশজোড়া তীব্র স্বাধীনতা আন্দোলন এদেশে গড়ে উঠল তা মূলতঃ হিন্দুধর্মভিত্তিক জাতীয়তাবাদ (Hindu religion-oriented nationalism) থেকে গিয়েছে। ...এরপর ধীরে ধীরে দেশের অভ্যন্তরে স্বাধীনতার আকাঙ্ক্ষা ও স্বাধীনতা আন্দোলন যখন প্রবল আকার ধারণ করল, ঠিক সেই সময়েই বাংলার সমাজে সাহিত্যিক হিসাবে শরৎচন্দ্রের অভ্যুত্থান। ধর্মীয় সংস্কারের (reformation) পথে রেনেশী আন্দোলনের মধ্যে বিদ্যাসাগর মশাইয়ের ভূমিকা যেমন মানবতাবাদী আন্দোলনকে তদানীন্তন সমাজপরিবেশে যতদূর সম্ভব ধর্মীয় প্রভাব ও ধর্মীয় যুক্তিবিচার থেকে মুক্ত করার ক্ষেত্রে একটা ছেদ (break), তেমনি স্বাধীনতা আন্দোলনের মধ্যে হিন্দুধর্মভিত্তিক জাতীয়তাবাদ (Hindu religion-oriented nationalism) এবং ধর্মের সঙ্গে আপোষমুখী জরাগ্রস্ত মানবতাবাদী চিন্তাভাবনা থেকে শরৎচন্দ্রও একটা ছেদ (break)। শরৎচন্দ্রের সাহিত্যচিন্তা ও দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী মূলতঃ বস্তুতাত্ত্বিক। তাঁর সাহিত্যচিন্তায় যেখানে তিনি ধারাবাহিক বস্তুতাত্ত্বিক থাকতে পারেন নি, সেখানে তিনি 'এগনস্টিক' থেকেছেন। কিন্তু অধ্যাবাদী চিন্তাভাবনাকে কখনও প্রণয় দেন নি, অতিপ্রাকৃতবাদের সাথে তাঁর সাহিত্যচিন্তায় ও সাহিত্যকর্মে তিনি কখনো আপোষ করেন নি।



তদানীন্তন সমাজপরিবেশে প্রগতি এবং প্রতিক্রিয়ার মাপকাঠিতে আমাদের বিচার করতে হবে যে, আমাদের দেশে সামন্ততন্ত্র ও সাম্রাজ্যবাদবিরোধী জাতীয় মুক্তি আন্দোলনের সময়ে রাজনীতিগত-সাংস্কৃতিকগত ক্ষেত্রে আপোষমুখী ও আপোষহীন যে দুটি ধারা বর্তমান ছিল তাব মধ্যে কোন ধারাটি আজকের দিনে সমাজপ্রগতির আন্দোলন সৃষ্টির ক্ষেত্রে সহায়ক হতে পারে। কোন ধারার 'কন্টিনিউয়িটি'তে বা অগ্রগতিব পরিণতিতে আজকের নতুন প্রেক্ষিতে—পুঁজিবাদবিরোধী বিপ্লবের চেতনা ও সর্বহারা সাংস্কৃতিক আন্দোলনের জন্ম দেওয়া সম্ভব হ'তে পারে। এই দিক থেকে বিচার করলে যে যৌবনোদ্ভূত, সেকুলার ও আপোষহীন বিপ্লবাত্মক মানবতাবাদের সূর শবৎচন্দ্রের সাহিত্যচিন্তা ও মূল্যবোধগুলির মধ্য দিয়ে প্রতিফলিত হয়েছে, একমাত্র সেই ধারার পরিণতিতেই (continuity) আমাদের দেশে আজকের দিনের সর্বহারা সাংস্কৃতিক আন্দোলন গড়ে উঠতে পারে। যদিও শবৎচন্দ্রের চিন্তাভাবনা ও মূল্যবোধগুলির শক্ত ভিতের উপরেই আজকের দিনের সর্বহারা সাংস্কৃতিক আন্দোলন গড়ে উঠবে, তবু শবৎচন্দ্রের সঙ্গ বিরোধও তার অবশ্যস্বাভাব্য।

এই আমি মুক্তকণ্ঠে জোর দিয়ে এ কথাটি বলব যে, আমাদের দেশে সাহিত্যের ক্ষেত্রে শবৎচন্দ্রই একমাত্র সাহিত্যিক যিনি তখনকার দিনে সমাজবিপ্লবের ঋণাত্মক উদ্বেগ তুলে ধরেছেন এবং সমাজবিপ্লবের কর্তব্য সম্পন্ন করার জন্য একনিষ্ঠভাবে লড়েছেন। অন্যান্য সাহিত্যিকরা সমাজবিপ্লব সম্পর্কে বক্তৃতা করেছেন, কিন্তু সাহিত্যক্ষেত্রে সমাজবিপ্লব আনয়নের জন্যে জিনিষটির দরকার ছিল তা করেন নি। এখানে পুরাণো সমাজের অকার্যকারিতা নিঃসংশয়ে মানুষকে উপলব্ধি করাবার জন্য মানুষের মনের মধ্যে দুঃখবেদনা, আত্মক্লেশ ও উন্নততর সমাজের জন্য অভাববোধ গড়ে তোলা-সাহিত্যের মাধ্যমে এই কাজগুলো তাঁরা করতে পারেন নি। একমাত্র শবৎচন্দ্রই এদেশে সার্থকভাবে এই কাজটি করেছেন। তাই দেখা যায় যে, তদানীন্তন পুরাণো সমাজের কর্তাদের থেকে সবচেয়ে বেশী আঘাত এসেছে শবৎচন্দ্রের উপরে। গোঁড়া হিন্দুসমাজ শবৎচন্দ্রের বিরোধী ছিল। অথচ তৎকালীন সময়ে হিন্দুসমাজের কুপমত্তকৃত্যব বিরুদ্ধে ব্রাহ্মসমাজ কম কথা বলেন নি। কিন্তু গোঁড়া হিন্দুসমাজ তাতে ভুক্তপও করেন নি, বা তাঁদের প্রভাবাধিত সাহিত্যিকদের বিরুদ্ধে অতো বিবাদগারও করেন নি। কারণ তাঁরা বুঝতে পেরেছিলেন যে, সমাজের মাটিটা ঐ সব সাহিত্যিকেরা স্পর্শ করতে পারেন নি। বাংলার সমাজের মাটিকে স্পর্শ করে মানুষের মানসিকতার পরিবর্তন করার জন্য যে সাহিত্য হিন্দুসমাজের বিরুদ্ধে কাজ করেছে এবং তার পুরাণো আচার, রীতিনীতিগুলোর বিরুদ্ধে কাজ করেছে, সে হচ্ছে শবৎসাহিত্য এবং শবৎচিন্তা।

... এই মানুষকে বাংলা সাহিত্যের একজন সমালোচক বলে বসলেন 'পাকশালার সাহিত্যিক'। আজকাল শবৎচন্দ্র সম্পর্কে এই ধরনের সমালোচনাই জ্বল-কলেজের ছেলেমেয়েরা পড়ছে। বিদ্যাদিগ্গজ না হয়ে কি তাদের উপায় আছে? শবৎসাহিত্যের পিছনে নাকি কোন তত্ত্ব এবং সূচিস্তিত কোন জীবনদর্শন নেই। একথা ঠিক যে, শবৎচন্দ্র তাঁর গম্প-উপন্যাসে সাধারণ মানুষের বুদ্ধির অগম্য বড় বড় কথা বলেন নি। তিনি মানুষের মনে রসসৃষ্টির মাধ্যমে বাথাবেদনা সৃষ্টি করে বড় চিন্তা বা ভাবনাধারণার বিষয়বস্তুলোকেই গোঁথে দিতে চেয়েছেন, যাতে বুদ্ধির দরজায় আশ্রয় নিতে না হয়। যারা বুদ্ধি দিয়ে গ্রহণ করতে পারবে তাদের জন্য তো তত্ত্বের আকারে জ্ঞানবিস্তারের বই-ই রয়েছে। তাহলে সাহিত্যের প্রয়োজন কি? সাহিত্যের দরকার তো এইখানেই—তত্ত্ববিচারের মাধ্যমে যে সত্যোপলব্ধি ও উন্নত ভাবনাধারণাগুলো গড়ে উঠছে, রসোত্তীর্ণ করে তাকে গম্পের মাধ্যমে নানা ডালপালয় খেলাবার জন্য এবং মানুষের মনের সূক্ষ্ম অনুভূতির মধ্যেও তার জায়গা করে দেবার জন্য। যারা তেমন শিক্ষার বুনয়াদ এবং নিষ্ঠা না থাকার জন্য যুক্তি এবং বুদ্ধি দিয়ে বড় কথাগুলো গ্রহণ করতে পারে না, রসসৃষ্টির মাধ্যমে বাথাবেদনা জাগিয়ে দিয়ে তাদের মনেও সেটা খানিকটা গোঁথে দেওয়া। এই কাজটি করার জন্যই তো সাহিত্যের প্রয়োজনীয়তা। যেমন ধরুন, মানবতাবাদ একটা সময়ে 'এথিক্যাল মাদারহুড'-এর ধারণা নিয়ে এসেছে। শবৎচন্দ্র জানতেন যে, এই সব তত্ত্ব কথা তো তত্ত্বের নানান বইতেই লুকিয়ে আছে। মানুষ সেগুলো পড়েও অনেক সময় আসল জিনিষটা ধরতে পারে না। তাই তিনি জীবনকে কেন্দ্র করে যে খাতপ্রতিঘাতের সৃষ্টি হয়, মানুষের সম্পর্কের মধ্যে যে জটিলতা গড়ে ওঠে, মানুষের মনে যে অনুভূতি এবং হৃদয়বেগ জন্ম নেয়, তার উপরে ক্রিয়া করে সূক্ষ্মরসের উপলব্ধি ঘটিয়ে এবং বাথাবেদনা জাগিয়ে দিয়ে মানুষের মনে সেই যুগের বড় তত্ত্বগুলোকেই গোঁথে দিতে চেয়েছেন। বুদ্ধি দিয়ে, পড়াশুনা করে যারা বুঝতে পারবে, তারা তো পারবেই—কিন্তু যারা সেইভাবে পারে না, জনসাধারণের সেই বিরাট অংশটা যাতে রসের মাধ্যমে বড় তত্ত্বের হৃদয় পেতে পারে। আর রসোপলব্ধির মাধ্যমে সত্যিকারের বড় জিনিষের হৃদয় যদি কোন মানুষ একবার পেয়ে যায়, তবে কিছু না বুঝেও সে খানিকটা পাশ্টে বাবে। মেয়েরা 'এথিক্যাল মাদারহুড' কি, সে সম্পর্কে তত্ত্ব জানার অর্থে একটি কথাও না জেনে 'এথিক্যাল মাদারহুড'-এর গুণাবলীর দিকে আকর্ষিত হ'তে থাকবে। গম্পের মধ্য দিয়েই এই 'এথিক্যাল মাদারহুড'-এর ধারণাকে কেন্দ্র করেই যে সব চরিত্র গড়ে উঠেছে, সেই বিন্দুর দিকে তাদের আকর্ষণ হবে, সাথে সাথে

যাদের দিকে তাদের আকর্ষণ হবে, মাথকেও তারা বুঝতে চাইবে। এইভাবে শরৎচন্দ্র বাথবেদনা জাগিয়ে দিয়ে এবং বড়কে পাওয়ার জন্য মানসিক অভাববোধ গড়ে তুলে সমস্যা তুলে ধরবার চেষ্টা করেছেন। পাতার পর পাতা ব্যাখ্যা করে তাঁর লেখাকে ভারাক্রান্ত করে তুলতে চান নি। .....যেমন ধরুন, শিক্ষিত মেয়েরা 'এথিকস্' কি, 'এথিক্যাল মাদারহুড' কি, তার উপর হাজার বক্তৃতা শুনতে যে জিনিষ আরম্ভ করতে পারে না- 'মেজদিদি'র হেমাজিনী, 'বিন্দুর ছেলের বিন্দুবাসিনী' এবং 'রামের স্মৃতি'র নারায়ণী তা প্রায়ই করেছে মনের সম্পদ দিয়ে। নারায়ণীর স্বামী এবং মা এর থেকে তাকে বিচ্যুত করতে পারে না, কোন হীন স্বার্থবোধই এর থেকে তাকে বিচ্যুত করতে পারে না। শরৎসাহিত্যের এই সমস্ত নারীচরিত্র রক্তের কোন সম্পর্ক না থাকা সত্ত্বেও, যাদের তারা সম্ভান হিসাবে দেখেছে, সেই সম্ভানের প্রতি তারা সমস্ত দায়দায়িত্ব পালন করেছে। বিনিময়ে সত্যিকারের নৈর্বাণিক মাতৃত্ব (impersonal motherhood) আদ্যাদি তারা পেয়েছে। শরৎচন্দ্র যেসব দিকগুলি এই গল্পের মধ্য দিয়ে তুলে ধরতে চেয়েছেন তা হ'ল, একটি মেয়ে যদি সত্যি জীবনে নৈর্বাণিক মাতৃত্ব (impersonal motherhood) সন্ধান পায়, তবে তার প্রকৃতি এবং বৃণরসগন্ধ কিরকম হয়? নিজের সম্ভান এবং পরের সম্ভানের মধ্যে ভেদাভেদই বা তার কাছে কিরকম দাঁড়ায়? এসবই তিনি স্তরে স্তরে দেখাতে চেষ্টা করেছেন। এগুলো কি শুধুমাত্র গল্প? এ গল্পগুলোর মধ্য দিয়ে নারীর মর্ষাদাবোধের যে ছবি আঁকা হয়েছে তা সবারই ভাল লাগে। কোন মেয়েই 'মেজদিদি' পড়ে মেজদিদির বড় জায়ের চরিত্র অনুসরণ করতে চাইবে না। মেয়েরা হেমাজিনী বা নারায়ণীর মত হ'লে পাবুক আর নাই পাবুক, এ গল্পগুলি পড়লেই তাদের নারায়ণীর মত বা মেজদিদির মত হওয়ার আকাংখা জাগবে। এই আকাংখা জাগার অর্থ কি? মেজদিদি এবং নারায়ণীর মত চারিত্রিক মান অর্জন করার জন্য ঘরের বো-বাদের মধ্যে যদি প্রবল আকাংখা জাগে—তারা এই বকম হওয়া উচিত বা একেই যদি ভাল ব'লে মনে করেন—তাহ'লে সমস্ত পরিবারের মধ্যেই নারীজাগৃতির একটা সত্যিকারের আন্দোলন চুকে গেল। সমালোচকরা এসব দেখতে পান না। শরৎসাহিত্যে কোন তত্ত্ব নেই ব'লে তারা সমালোচনা করেন। আর সেই তত্ত্বের কথাগুলোই যখন শরৎচন্দ্র এমন অপরূপ কৌশলে ঘরে ঢুকিয়ে দিলেন, তা হ'লে গেল তত্ত্ববিবজিত। এ এক বিচিত্র অন্তঃসাবণ্য ইন্টেলেকচুয়াল মানসিকতা।

....সাহিত্যিকের সম্প্রদায় ও সাহিত্যচিন্তা দুটো আলাদা জিনিষ। কোন সাহিত্যিকের সাহিত্য বিচারের ক্ষেত্রে এই দুটি দিককে এক করে ফেলে গোলমাল করা উচিত নয়। একটি তার চিন্তার দিক, আর একটি রসোত্তীর্ণ হওয়ার দিক - কত উচ্চমানের রসসৃষ্টি করতে তিনি সক্ষম, কত সূক্ষ্ম রসের কারবার করতে সক্ষম। এই দিক থেকে যদি বিচার করা যায়, তাহ'লে দেখা যাবে শরৎসাহিত্যে এই রস নিবেদন করার প্রক্রিয়া এত সূক্ষ্ম যে, মানুষ কিছু না বুঝেই শুধু তার রস গ্রহণ করতে করতেই খানিকটা পাণ্টে যায়। এই ক্ষমতার দিক থেকে ওদানীশুন সাহিত্যিকদের মধ্যে শরৎচন্দ্র ছিলেন সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ। তাই সাহিত্যশৈলীতে তিনি সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ, একথা আমি নিঃসংশয়ে বলতে পারি।

... তত্ত্বের বড় বড় কথাগুলো নিয়ে গুরুগম্ভীর আলোচনা করা সাহিত্যিকের কাজ নয়, তিনি রসপ্রসূত। এইখানেই সাহিত্যিকের স্বার্থ সাধকতা। তাই একটা কথা আমার বারবার মনে হয়েছে, ঋগ্বেদ সাহিত্যের মধ্যে শুধু বড় কথা খুঁজতে যান এবং তারই মাপকাঠিতে সাহিত্যের মূল্য বিচার করেন, উরো সাহিত্যবিচারের ক্ষেত্রে অবোধ্য পাত। কারণ, কতগুলো বড় বড় কথার জন্য সাহিত্যের কদর নয়। সমাজে তার কার্যকারিতা অন্য জায়গায়। বড় বড় কথা বলার নোকের অভাব দুনিয়ায় কোনদিনই হয়নি। সাহিত্যিকদের থেকেও অনেক বড় বড় লোক সেক্ষেত্রে সমাজে আছেন। তার জন্য দার্শনিকরা রয়েছেন, অর্থনীতিবিদরা রয়েছেন, বাজনৈতিক চিন্তানায়করা রয়েছেন, বিভিন্ন শাস্ত্রের সুপারিতরা রয়েছেন। কিন্তু তাঁরা যে কাজটি পারেন না, সেই কাজটি করেন সাহিত্যিক। সেইখানে তাঁদেরও প্রস্থার পাঠ হলেন সাহিত্যিক, তাঁদেরও পূজনীয় হলেন সাহিত্যিক। যে জায়গায় আমরা অক্ষম, সেই জায়গায়-ই সাহিত্যিকের কার্যকারিতা। যে কথাগুলো দার্শনিকরা, চিন্তানায়করা বোঝাতে চান, সাহিত্যিক সেগুলো এমনভাবে মানুষকে রসের মাধ্যমে নানান দিকে খেলিয়ে খেলিয়ে বলেন যে, মানুষ বুঝির জন্য যদি তা নাও গ্রহণ করতে পারে, রসগ্রহণ করতে করতে, বাকাবিন্যাস আওড়াতে আওড়াতে, ডায়ালগগুলো আরম্ভ করতে করতে তাতে অভ্যস্ত হ'লে গিয়ে খানিকটা তার মানসিক পরিবর্তন ঘটে যায়। কাজেই সমাজে সেই মানসিক বিপ্লব, সাংস্কৃতিক ক্ষেত্রে সেই বিপ্লব আনবার জন্য সাহিত্য অত্যন্ত কার্যকরী অস্ত্র।

তাই স্বাধীনতা আন্দোলন হোক, সমাজতান্ত্রিক বিপ্লব হোক বা সমাজের আমূল পরিবর্তনই হোক, যা রাজনৈতিক আন্দোলনের আবহাওয়ায় আসবে তার মানসিক জমি তৈরীর ক্ষেত্রেই সাহিত্যিকের দরকার। সেইখানেই তাঁর প্রগতিশীল ভূমিকা।

এইদিক থেকে বিচার করলে ভারতবর্ষে যখন রেনেসাঁ আন্দোলন এবং জাতীয় স্বাধীনতা আন্দোলন চলছে, সমাজবিপ্লবের আন্দোলন চলছে, তখন তার পরিপূরক সাহিত্যসৃষ্টির ক্ষেত্রে শরৎচন্দ্রই সবচেয়ে অগ্রণী ভূমিকা, সকলের চেয়ে প্রগতিশীল ভূমিকা পালন করেছেন।

শরৎচন্দ্র তাঁর সাহিত্যে তত্ত্বের বড় বড় কথাগুলোই বলেছেন। কিন্তু বলেছেন গম্পসৃষ্টির মধ্য দিয়ে, রসের মাধ্যমে। তিনি তত্ত্বকথা লিখে কোথাও বোঝাতে চান নি আমি এইখানে এই আলোচনা করছি। এই বস্তুই রাখছি। সাহিত্যিক হিসাবে এইখানেই তাঁর সার্থকতা সবচাইতে বেশী।

তত্ত্ব আলোচনা আমিও হয়তো কিছু কিছু করতে পারি। জ্ঞানবিজ্ঞানের বিভিন্ন শাখা থেকে এমন কথা কিছু কিছু বলতে পারি, যা শুনলে হতবাক হ'তে হবে। কিন্তু আমিও সাহিত্যিকের দরবারে খণা দিই, ভিক্ষা মাগি। তা নাহ'লে বড় কথা শোনার জন্য ববীন্দ্রনাথের দরজায়ও যাইনা, গোটেব দরজায়ও যাওয়াব দরকাব হয়না। আমি জানি, আমাব এতখা শূনে হয়ত অনেক রেগে যেতে পাবেন। কিন্তু একথা সত্য যে, চিন্তার জন্য ববীন্দ্রনাথ বা গোটেব কাছে আমাদেব যেতে হয়না। তাঁদের কাছে আমাদের যেতে হয় অন্য কাণে। লেনিনেব মত মানুষকেও যেতে হয়েছে সাহিত্যিকের দরবারে। আমাকেও যেতে হচ্ছে। সকল দেশের সবকালেব সমস্ত চিন্তানায়কদেরই যেতে হয়। এই কারণেই যেতে হয় যে, তাঁদেরও একটা অভাববোধ আছে। সেই অভাববোধ তাঁরা সাহিত্যেব রসের মাধ্যমে পূরণ করেন। আর তাড়াতাড়ি সমাজেব মধ্যে যে চিন্তাভাবনা, ধ্যানধারণাগুলোকে আমবা নিষে যেতে চাই, আমরা যা পারি না, সাহিত্যিক রসসৃষ্টির মাধ্যমে সেই চিন্তাভাবনাগুলোকে সমাজের মননেব মধ্যে নিয়ে যান। এইখানেই তিনি আমাদের চেয়ে বড় ক্ষমতাব অধিকারী। সেইজন্য আমবা তাঁদের পূজারী, আমরা তাঁদের শ্রদ্ধা করি। তাই সর্বকালেই দেখা গেছে, বড় সাহিত্যিকবা বড় চিন্তানায়কদের মানেন। আবার বড় চিন্তানায়করা বড় সাহিত্যিকদের কদর বোঝেন, শ্রদ্ধাব আসনে রাখেন। ছোট সাহিত্যিকদেরই অহমবোধ আছে। তাই তাঁরা বড় চিন্তানায়কদের অস্বীকার করতে চান। কিন্তু কোন দেশের বড় সাহিত্যিকরা সে যুগেব বড় চিন্তানায়ককে অশ্রদ্ধা করেন নি। কারণ, তাঁরা পরস্পর পরস্পরের প্রয়োজন বোঝেন এবং বোঝেন কোথায় কার গুরুত্ব। তাই শরৎসাহিত্যে যারাই বড় বড় কথা খুঁজে গেছেন, তাঁরাই শরৎচন্দ্রকে বুঝতে পারেন নি। আর না বুঝেই তাঁদের অনেকে তাঁকে 'পাকশালাব সাহিত্যিক' আখ্যা দিয়েছেন। এ'দের প্রতি সত্যিই করুণা হয়। আবার যারা শরৎচন্দ্রকে প্রশংসাও করেছেন, তাঁরাও শরৎসাহিত্যেব যথার্থ মর্মার্থ ও গুরুত্ব অনুভব করতে না পাবাব ফলে তাকে শুধু 'মিষ্টি গম্প লেখক', বা 'দরদী লেখক' বা 'কথাসাহিত্যিক' আখ্যা দিয়েছেন।

ইউরোপীয় বেনেসাঁর গোড়ার দিকের ইতিহাস অনুধাবন করলে দেখা যাবে যে, সেই আন্দোলনেব রূপ তখন মূলতঃ ছিল 'সেকুলার', বিপ্লবাত্মক এবং যৌবনোদ্দীপ্ত। এই বেনেসাঁ আন্দোলন ধর্ম ও অধ্যাত্মবাদী চিন্তাব বিরুদ্ধে আপোষহীন সুরকেই প্রাতিফলিত করেছে। এই বেনেসাঁ আন্দোলনেব উদ্গাতাদের বক্তব্য ছিলঃ 'ইতিহাস, যুক্তিবিজ্ঞান এবং প্রমাণের ভিত্তিতেই সত্যানুসন্ধান করতে হবে। তা'ও যদি কিছু ভুলবৃত্তি থাকে তো থাকুক। অজ্ঞেয় যদি কিছু থাকে তবে তাকে ভূমিও জানতে পার না, আমিও জানতে পারি না। ফলে তাব পিছনে ছোটোছুটি ক'বে কোন লাভ নেই।' শরৎচন্দ্রেব সাহিত্যচিন্তাব ক্ষেত্রে ইউরোপীয় রেনেসাঁ আন্দোলনেব প্রথম যুগেব মানবতাবাদেব আপোষহীন ধারাবই এদেশে প্রাতিফলন ঘটেছে। তাব জনাই শরৎচন্দ্র ঠাট্টা ক'রে বলেছেনঃ 'যা বুদ্ধিব বাইবে তাকে বুদ্ধিব বাইবে বলেই ভাগ্য কণ। মুখে বলব অবাঙ, অবাঙা, অজ্ঞেয়, আর কাজে কথায় তাকেই ক্রমাগত বলবাব চেষ্টা, জানাব চেষ্টা কিছুতেই কবব না। যিনি করবেন তাঁকেও কোনমতে সহ্য করব না যে মুখে বলেছেন জানা যায়না, সেই মুখেই আলাব এত কথা বলেছেন, যেন এই মাঠ সমস্ত স্বচক্ষে দেখে এলেন। যাকে কোনমতেই উপলব্ধি করা যায়না, তাকেই উপলব্ধি কবাব জন্য পাতাব পব পাঠা, বই-এব পর বই লিখে যাচ্ছেন। কেন?' নিগু'ণ, নিরাকার, নিলিপ্ত, নির্বিকার এসব কেবল কথাব কথা। এর কোন মানে নেই।' কাবণ, কেউ পুংখানুপুংখভাবে যদি ইতিহাসকে বিশ্লেষণ করেন, তাহ'লেই তিনি ফে'সে যাবেন।

শরৎচন্দ্রকে নানা সময়ে অনেকেই প্রশ্ন করেছিলেনঃ 'আপনি তো সাহিত্যিক, কিন্তু আপনার ঘরে গিয়ে দেখি যত বিজ্ঞানেব বই অংকশাস্ত্র থেকে শুরু ক'রে ফিজিক্স, কোমিট্রী পর্যন্ত সমস্ত সাজানো রয়েছে। ইতিহাস, মনোবিজ্ঞান এবং অর্থনীতি-শাস্ত্রের বইতেই লাইব্রেরী ঠাসা। কই, বিশ্বের অন্যান্য সাহিত্যিকদের বই তো আপনার ঘরে দেখিনা?' একবার চন্দননগরের আলোচনা সভায় মতিবাবুবাও নানা ধরনের প্রশ্ন শরৎচন্দ্রকে জিজ্ঞাসা করেছিলেন। সেইসব প্রশ্নের উত্তর দিতে গিয়ে এক জায়গায়

শরৎচন্দ্র বলেছিলেন: 'আমি নিজে গম্প লিখি, গম্প পড়ি না তা নয়, তাই বু'জে-টু'জে বের করলে দু-চারখানা হয়তো পাওয়াও যাবে। কিন্তু আমার এসব গম্প পড়তে তেমন ভাল লাগে না।' কথাটা মতিবাবুদের শরৎচন্দ্র ঠাট্টা করেই বলেছিলেন। কিন্তু এ কথাটার দ্বারা আসলে তিনি যে কথাটা বলতে চাইলেন তা হ'ল, সামাজিক সমস্যার উপলব্ধি করা এবং গম্প বলার মধ্য দিয়ে সেই সমস্যা সম্পর্কে যদি কিছু বলতে হয়, অর্থাৎ ঘটনাসংঘাত এবং চরিত্রসৃষ্টির মধ্য দিয়ে যদি সত্য উদ্ঘাটন করতে হয়, তবে তা একজন সাহিত্যিক তো তখনই পারেন, যখন সমাজ ও মানুষকে তিনি সত্যসত্যি বুঝেছেন। আর এ সত্য বুঝতে হ'লে তো বিজ্ঞান না জানলে বোঝা যাবে না। তাই মানুষের কোন মানসিকতা কিভাবে, কোন খাতে গ'ড়ে উঠেছে তা জানার জন্য বিজ্ঞানকে জানতে হবে, ইতিহাসকে খুঁটিয়ে খুঁটিয়ে বিচার করে দেখতে হবে।

তাই দেখুন, শরৎচন্দ্রের এই ধরনের বাস্তবানুগ, বৈজ্ঞানিক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী ছিল ব'লেই কুসংস্কারের বিরুদ্ধে লড়াই করার ব্যাপারে রবীন্দ্রনাথের সংগে তাঁর বিরোধভাবে একটা বিরোধ এসে গেল। কুসংস্কার, জাতিপাত এগুলোকে যেকোন যুক্তিশীল মানুষই খারাপ জিনিষ বলবেন। স্বাধীনতা আন্দোলনের যুগেও কোন বড় মানুষই জাতিপাত সমর্থন করতেন না। কিন্তু শরৎচন্দ্র এর বিরুদ্ধে লড়াইয়ের পদ্ধতি নিয়ে রবীন্দ্রনাথের সংগে এবং অন্য অনেকের সংগেই একমত ছিলেন না। শরৎচন্দ্র জানতেন, ছোয়াছু'য়ির দোস বাঁচিয়ে চলা, জাতপাত মেনে চলা, এই যে জিনিষগুলি মানুষের মধ্যে আছে, এগুলো সংস্কার। আর কোন একটা জিনিষ অভ্যাস করতে করতে যখন সমষ্টির অভ্যাসে পরিণত হয়ে যায়—অর্থাৎ ঠিক হোক বেঠিক হোক, মানুষ তাকে মেনে চলতে অভ্যস্ত হ'য়ে পড়ে—তখনই তা সংস্কারে পরিণত হয়। শরৎচন্দ্র তাঁর প্রবন্ধ ও ছোটখাটো লেখার মধ্য দিয়ে ব্যাপারটাকে বোঝানোর চেষ্টা করেছেন। তিনি উদাহরণ দিয়ে দেখিয়েছেন, মা তার যে সন্তান বিলেত যায় তার জাতিচ্যুত হওয়ার ভয়ে কাঁদেন। সেই ছেলে ফিরে এলে রোগশয্যায় ব'সে না খেয়ে তার শূশ্রূষা করেন। কিন্তু তারপরে গঙ্গাজলে স্নান করে তবেই তিনি খেতে যান। চোখ দিয়ে জল পড়লেও সেই ছেলের হাতে তিনি খেতে পারেন না। সংস্কারের ভিত্তি যেখানে এইরকম দৃঢ়মূল, শরৎচন্দ্রের বক্তব্য হচ্ছে, সেখানে যে ধরনের যুক্তি তুলে মানুষের মন থেকে সেই সংস্কারকে গুরুদেব দূর করতে চাইছেন, তা কখনও সম্ভব নয়। গুরুদেব বোঝাচ্ছেন: 'মানুষ কি বিড়ালের থেকেও অধম? যে মিনি বিড়ালটা তোমার পাতের থেকে খেতে পারে তাতে তোমার জাত যায়না, কিন্তু একটা মানুষ—ছোটজাতের বা অন্য ধর্মের—তু'লেই জাত চলে যায়?' শরৎচন্দ্র দুঃখ পেয়ে এবং খানিকটা বিধূপ করে রবীন্দ্রনাথকে উদ্দেশ্য করে বলেছেন যে, এইসব মানুষের সমস্যায় গাছপালা, জন্তুজানোয়ার আসেই বা কেন? আর এসেই বা এগুলো কি প্রমাণ করে? "বেড়াল কেন কোলে বসে, পিঁপড়ে কেন পাতে ওঠে, এসব তর্ক তুলে মানুষের ন্যায়অন্যায় বিচার হয়না।...এসব উপমা শুনতে ভাল, দেখতেও চকচকে করে, কিন্তু যাচাই করলে দাম যা ধরা পড়ে তা অকিঞ্চিৎকর।" তাই তিনি ঠাট্টা করে বলেছেন: "ব্রাহ্মণীর পোষা বিড়ালটা এ'টো মুখে গিয়ে তার কোলে বসে, তাতে শূচিতা নষ্ট হয়না তিনি আপত্তি করেননা, খুব সম্ভব করেননা। কিন্তু তাতে প্রমাণ করলে কি? বিড়ালের গুঁজিতে একথা তো ব্রাহ্মণীকে বলা চলেনা যে, যেহেতু অতি নিকৃষ্ট জীব বিড়ালটা গিয়ে তোমার কোলে বসেছে, তুমি আপত্তি করোনি, অতএব অতি উৎকৃষ্ট জীব আমিও গিয়ে তোমার কোলে বসবো, তুমি আপত্তি করতে পারবেনা।" এইরকম একটা যুক্তি হয় নাকি? দ্বারা জাতের সমস্যাটা ঠিকভাবে গোঝেন তাঁরা জানেন যে, শূশ্রূ অশ্রদ্ধার জন্য হাতে খেতে পারেনা, ব্যাপারটা এরকমও নয়। যেখানে এ'তোটুকু অশ্রদ্ধা নেই, যেখানে হৃদয়ভরা ভালবাসা আছে, সেখানেও সংস্কারের জন্য মানুষ খেতে পারে না। 'গৃহদাহ' উপন্যাসেব মধ্যে রামবাবুর চরিত্রচরণের মধ্য দিয়ে তিনি সমস্যাটাকে তুলে ধরতে চেয়েছেন। এক মুহূর্তে এই স্নেহপ্রবণ এবং সহৃদয় মানুষটাকে কত কঠিন করে তুলল সংস্কার। অচলার প্রতি স্নেহ যখন তাকে ধর্মের সীমা প্রায় ছাড়িয়ে নিয়ে চ'লে গিয়েছিল, তখন এক মুহূর্তে সংস্কার এসে, যে মানুষটার এতোবড় হৃদয়বেগ, তাঁকে একটা অমানুষ করে তুলল। তাই তিনি এভাবে চরিত্রচরণ করে দেখাতে চেয়েছেন, যে সংস্কার, যে আচার, যে জাতপাতমানা, যে রীতিনীতিগুলো মানুষকে এমন অমানুষ করে তুলে কর্তব্য করতে ভুলিয়ে দেয়, স্নেহমমতা ভুলিয়ে দেয়, দায়িত্ব পালন করতে দেয়না, সেগুলো পরিভাগ করাই ভ্রম। মানুষের মনে বাধ্যবেদনা জাগিয়ে দিয়ে তিনি সেগুলোকে দূর করতে চেয়েছেন। কারণ, শরৎচন্দ্র জানতেন যে, সংস্কারের ভিত্তিমূলে আঘাত করে, এর বিরুদ্ধে সামাজিক আন্দোলন গ'ড়ে তুলতে না পারলে সমাজকে এর বিষময় প্রভাব থেকে মুক্ত করা যাবে না। তাই তিনি একটা সময়ে দুঃখ করে বলেছিলেন বিদ্যাসাগরের মত মানুষ সমাজে বিধবাবিবাহের প্রচলন করতে চাইলেন। সমাজের বিরুদ্ধে দাঁড়িয়ে তিনি এ জিনিষ চালু করতে চাইলেন। আইনের সহায়তা নিয়ে জোর করে কিছু সংখ্যক বিধবার বিয়েও দিলেন; কিন্তু সমাজ থেকে এ প্রথা

হটতে পারলেন না। কারণ, সামাজিক আন্দোলন হিসাবে তা যুগে নিতে পারেনি। যদি পারত তবে সার্থক হ'ত। আইনপ্রণয়ন হওয়া সত্ত্বেও বিধবাপ্রথা সংস্কারের মধ্যে জট হ'য়ে থেকেই গেল। তদানীন্তন সময়ের সাহিত্যিকরা যদি মানুষের মনে বাধাবোধনা জাগিয়ে মানুষের মানসিক গুণকেই পাল্টে দিতে পারতেন, বিধবাবিবাহের কেন প্রয়োজন মানুষকে তা বোঝাতে পারতেন, তাহ'লে হয়তো বিধবাবিবাহের প্রচলনের পক্ষে একটা সামাজিক মতামত তৈরী হ'তে পারত। শুধুমাত্র প্রবন্ধ লিখে বা বক্তৃতা দিয়ে প্রয়োজনীয়তা বোঝানো নয়, বিধবাদের জীবন সুন্দরভাবে পরিষ্কৃত ক'রে তুলে মানুষের মনের মধ্যে বাধাবোধনা জাগিয়ে চোখে আসুল দিয়ে দেখানো—যেমন করে শরৎচন্দ্র রমা এবং রমেশকে অঙ্কন করেছেন।

.....একদল সমালোচক ব'লে থাকেন, শরৎচন্দ্র বিধবাবিবাহকে সমর্থন করেন নি। কারণ, শরৎচন্দ্র তাঁর সাহিত্যে বিধবাদের বিয়ে দেননি। সাক্ষী বিধবা, তাকে বিয়ে দেননি; রমা বিধবা, তাকেও বিয়ে দেননি; তার জন্য একথা তো পরিষ্কার বোঝাই যায় যে, বিধবাদের বিয়ে দিতে তাঁর কুসংস্কারে বেধেছে। আমি মনে করি, ধারা এই ধরনের সমালোচনা করেছেন, তাঁরা সাহিত্য আলোচনার অযোগ্য ব্যক্তি। শরৎচন্দ্র জানতেন যে, তদানীন্তন সমাজ পরিবেশে রমেশ-রমার বিয়ে দিতে হ'লে তাদের হোটেল নিয়ে ওঠাতে হ'ত, অথবা হিন্দী সিনেমার নায়ক-নায়িকাদের মত ক'রে দিতে হ'ত। তা নাহ'লে সেই গ্রামীণ সমাজ পরিবেশের মধ্যে রমা-রমেশের বিবাহ প্রকার আসন পাবে না। সমাজ পরিবেশে প্রকার আসনে প্রতিষ্ঠিত হ'তে না পারলে পরম্পরের ভালবাসা শুধু নিজের জোরেই তার সৌন্দর্য এবং মাধুর্য বজায় রাখতে পারে না। তাই তিনি রমাকে বিধবা সাজিয়েছেন, বিধবা হওয়া সত্ত্বেও তার চারিত্রিক সৌন্দর্যের তুলনা নেই। রমেশের সঙ্গে তার সত্যিকারের একটা সুন্দর সম্পর্ক গ'ড়ে তুলে তিনি দেখাতে চেয়েছেন—দেখতো, রমা বিধবা হওয়া সত্ত্বেও এই যে দুজনের সম্পর্কটা আমি এ'কে দিয়েছি এবং এদের দুজনের সম্পর্কে কেন্দ্র ক'বে যে মাধুর্য ও সৌন্দর্য ফুটে উঠেছে, তা কি কিছু কটু দেখাচ্ছে? তোমরা যারা ঘরে-ঘরে নখওয়ালা বউ নিয়ে ঘর করছ এবং প্রেম করছ, একি সেই জাতের জিনিষ? নাকি এটা একটা অত্যন্ত বড় দরের জিনিষ? রমেশ-রমার এই কাহিনী কি মনের মধ্যে বাধা জাগায়? এদের জীবনকে কেন্দ্র ক'রে যে সম্পর্কটা গ'ড়ে উঠল তাই পরিণতিতে এদের মিলন ঘটুক, তা কি তোমরা চাও? যদি চাও তবে মর্যাদার সঙ্গে এদের জীবনকে সুপারিত করতে হ'লে এই পুরাণো হিন্দুসমাজটাকে ভেঙ্গে ফেলতে হবে।

.....চারিচর্যহীন সাবিত্রীর চরিত্রের কথা দিয়ে তিনি দেখাতে চেয়েছেন যে, সাবিত্রী সমাজের প্রচলিত মনন, সমাজের যে ধর্মীয় কুসংস্কার এবং ধর্মভিত্তিক নৈতিকতা তার বিচারে একটা কুলটা, একটা বাড়ীর নীচ চরিত্রের দাসী মাত্র। সরোজিনীর মত একটা শিক্ষিতা ভদ্রঘরের মেয়ের কাছেও যে লোভনীয় পাঠ, সেই সতীশ তাকে কি ক'রে ভালবাসতে পারে? সতীশের সঙ্গে তার যদি কোন সম্পর্ক হয়ও তবে সেটা একটা ক্রীম সম্পর্ক হ'তে পারে, অথবা একটা নিম্নস্তরের যৌন সম্পর্ক হ'তে পারে। শরৎচন্দ্র অতি সাধারণ এই ধরনের এ'টা মেয়েকে নিয়ে এসে সতীশের সঙ্গে রসিয়ে রসিয়ে সংলাপের মাধ্যমে অতি সতর্কতার সঙ্গে সমস্ত নিম্নবৃত্তি থেকে তাদের রক্ষা ক'রে সম্পর্কটাকে সত্যিকারের আকর্ষণীয় ক'রে তুলে একটা সৌন্দর্য সৃষ্টি করলেন এবং সমস্ত ধর্মিক পাঠকসমাজ, ঘরের বোঁঝি এবং শিক্ষিত-অশিক্ষিত লোকের সামনে ফেলে দিয়ে বলতে চাইলেন—দেখতো, এটা খারাপ কিনা? এই সম্পর্কটা দেখতে কি রকম লাগছে? পড়তে মনে বাধা লাগে? সাবিত্রীর জন্য কি তোমরা দুঃখ অনুভব কর? সতীশ-সাবিত্রী মিলতে না পারলে তোমাদের মনের মধ্যে কি বেদনা এবং ক্ষোভ জাগে? সবাই একবাক্যে উত্তর দেবে—হ্যাঁ, জাগে। আমরা চাই ওদের যদি একটা মিলন হ'ত। শরৎচন্দ্র বলতে চাইলেন, তোমরা চাওয়া সত্ত্বেও ওদের মিলন হ'তে পারে না যতক্ষণ হিন্দুধর্ম ও হিন্দুসমাজটি আছে। শরৎচন্দ্র তাঁর এই সব লেখাগুলির কথা দিয়ে পাঠকমনে একটা অভাববোধ ও বাধাবোধনা জাগিয়ে দিয়ে সমাজ অভ্যন্তরে সমাজবিপ্লবের প্রবল আকাঙ্ক্ষা জাগিয়ে তুলতে চেয়েছেন, সমাজবিপ্লব সম্পর্কে কতগুলি উপর উপর ফাঁকা কথা আওড়ে নিজেকে এবং অপরকে বিভ্রান্ত করতে চাননি।

.....'চারিচর্যহীন' বইখানাতে কিরণময়ীর চরিত্র শরৎচন্দ্রের আর একটি বিস্ময়কর সৃষ্টি। অপূর্ব দক্ষতার সাথে কিরণময়ীর চরিত্রাচরণের মাধ্যমে তিনি শিক্ষিত পাঠকসমাজের কাছে যেন বলতে চাইলেন—ভেবে দেখতো, নারী যদি এমন হয়, তবে তোমাদের কেমন লাগে? নিজের ঘরের নখ পরা মেয়েদের, বা প্রেমিকাদের সাথে মিলিয়ে দেখতো পছন্দ হয় কিনা? কিন্তু কিরণময়ীর মত জ্ঞানে, বিদ্যায়, বুদ্ধিতে, পাণ্ডিত্যে, উদারত্বে ও সৌন্দর্যে এমন উন্নত একটি নারীর ভবিষ্যৎ কী তোমাদের এই কুসংস্কারাচ্ছন্ন হিন্দুসমাজে? এই সমাজে উন্মাদ হওয়া ছাড়া তার আর কোন উপায় আছে কি? এমন উন্নত ধরনের বুদ্ধিসংকীর্ণ

ও নারীষের অধিকারিণী হ'য়ে সে তো আর পাঁচটা অতি সাধারণ মেয়ের মত যেমনতমেন ভাবে অথবা অধঃপতিত হ'য়ে জীবনযাপন করতে পারে না ।

.....এই কিরণময়ী দিবাকরের সঙ্গে জাহাজে এক বিছানায় রাত কাটিয়েছে, অথচ তার দেহ দেয়নি—এই ঘটনাকে উল্লেখ করে অনেক সমালোচক বলে থাকেন, এইখানেই নাকি শরৎচন্দ্র হিন্দুধর্মের সংস্কারকে মেনে চলেছেন । অথচ মতিবাবুদের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় শরৎচন্দ্র নিজেই, কেন কিরণময়ীর মত মেয়ে দিবাকরকে দেহ দিতে পারে না তার কারণ ব্যাখ্যা করেছেন । চন্দননগরের আলোচনা সভায় মতিবাবুরা শরৎচন্দ্রকে ঠাট্টা করে বলেছিলেন যে, আপনি লেখার ক্ষেত্রে যতগড় কথাই বলুননা কেন, আসলে আপনি হিন্দুধর্মের নারীর যে সতীষ তাকে অত্যন্ত শ্রদ্ধার চোখে দেখেন । তাই কিরণময়ীর দেহ আপনি নষ্ট হ'তে দেন নি । শরৎচন্দ্র হোসেই অশ্রুর । বললেন, আপনারা ঐ চরিত্রটার কিছুই বোঝেন নি । আপনাদের হিন্দুধর্মের সতীষ থাকল কি গেল, ঐ চরিত্রটা সৃষ্টি করার সময়ে আমি সেসব কিছুই ভাবিনি । কিরণময়ীর চরিত্র আমি অতি স্নেহে সৃষ্টি করেছি 'চরিত্রহীন'-এ সরোজিনীকে দেখা গিয়েছে শিক্ষিত পরিবেশে শিক্ষিত মেয়ে । সুবদ্যালকেও সবাই দেখেছে, উপেনব মত স্বামীও যার ভালবাসার রসে একবারে মগ্ন হ'য়ে আছে । ঐ একই বইয়ের ভিতরে সাবিট্রী চরিত্র কি অপূর্ণ বস এবং মাধুর্ষে পরিপূর্ণ । এই চরিত্রগুলো না থাকলে কিরণময়ীকে ঊঁকা অতো কঠিন হ'ত না । এরই পাশে কিরণময়ীকে সৃষ্টি করার জন্য অনেক কষ্ট করতে হয়েছে এবং কাঁঠড় পোড়াতে হয়েছে । ফলে, যাকে এমন যত্নে এমন সুন্দরভাবে তৈরী করা হয়েছে, দিবাকরের মত একটা ছেলেমানুষের কাছে দেহ দিলে সেই চরিত্রটাই মাটি হ'য়ে যেত । কিরণময়ী এমন একটি নারী চরিত্র যার বিদ্যা বুদ্ধি, জ্ঞান এবং বুদ্ধির তুলনায় দিবাকর নিতান্ত ছেলেমানুষ । এমন ব্যক্তিশালিনী, গুণবতী এবং চরিত্রবতী যে নারী, সে কি দিবাকরের মত একটা খোকাব কাছের দেহদান করতে পারে ? যদিও কিরণময়ী নিজেই উপেন্দ্র'র ওপর প্রতিশোধ নেওয়ার তীব্র স্পৃহা থেকে দিবাকরকে ঘরের বাইরে নিয়ে এসেছিল । কারণ, সে জানত, দিবাকর উপেন্দ্র'র অত্যন্ত প্রিয় পাঠ । কাজেই সে ঐরকমভাবে উপেন্দ্রকে পাল্টা আঘাত দিতে চাইল । কিন্তু শেষ পর্যন্ত সে বুঝতে পারল, উপেন্দ্র যতটা না আঘাত পেয়েছে, সে নিজেই আহত হয়েছে তার চেয়ে অনেক বেশী । ভুল সে করেছে, কিন্তু তবুও তো সে একজন অত্যন্ত বুদ্ধিসম্পন্ন নারী । তাই নিজের সঙ্গে নিজেই জীবনের শেষ দিন পর্যন্ত তাকে লড়াই করে যেতে হ'ল । ছলনা করে দিবাকরের মধ্যে সে যে কাম-উত্তেজনা এবং আকর্ষণ সৃষ্টি করল -শুধু উপেন্দ্র'র ওপর প্রতিশোধ নেওয়ার জন্য—সেই দিবাকরের কাছ থেকেই তার নারীষের মর্যাদা রক্ষা করতে গিয়ে সে হ'ল ক্ষতিবিক্ষত । কিন্তু নারীষকে সে নামাতে পারে নি । তাই শরৎচন্দ্র ঠাট্টা করে বলেছেন, নারীর সতীষ থাকে, কি গেল, এ বিষয়ে তাঁর ভ্রূক্ষেপই ছিল না । শরৎচন্দ্রের একমাত্র ভাবনা ছিল, এমন সঙ্গে গড়া নারীষের অধিকারিণী কিরণময়ীর চরিত্রটাই তাহ'লে মাটি হ'য়ে যেত ।

.....শরৎচন্দ্র রমা, কিরণময়ী, সাবিট্রী এইসব চরিত্রগুলো উপস্থাপনা করে রসের মধ্য দিয়ে পাঠকমনে বেদনা জাগিয়ে সমাজ-মানসিকতায় যে কুসংস্কার, যে অন্ধ কৃপমণ্ডুকতা রয়েছে, তাকেই ভাঙতে চেয়েছেন । প্রশ্ন জাগাতে চেয়েছেন, তোমরা কিরণময়ীর মত এমন মেয়ে চাও কি ? এমন শিক্ষায়-দীক্ষায় গুণবতী মেয়ে চাও কি ? যদি চাও, তবে এই সমাজে তাকে লালনপালন করবে কি করে ? তোমরা যে সব মেয়েদের নিয়ে ঘর কব তাদের মত, না সাবিট্রীর মত ভাষায় তোমাদের সঙ্গে কথা বলে তেমন মেয়ে চাও ? যদি চাও, তাহ'লে সে মেয়ে এই সমাজে জন্মগ্রহণ কবলেও তাকে তোমরা ধ'রে রাখবে কি দিয়ে ? হয় তোমরা নথওয়ালো বৌ নিয়ে ঘর কর, হিন্দুধর্মের আচারবিচার কর, আর তা না হ'লে সমাজটাকে ভাঙো । নারী শিক্ষা, স্বাধীনতার বিকাশ, মর্যাদাবোধের বৃদ্ধি এবং চারিত্রিক উন্নতি তো পুরুষের নিজের প্রয়োজনেই সবচেয়ে বেশী দরকার । কিন্তু মূর্থ পুরুষরা হীনতার দ্বারা পরিচালিত হ'য়ে নিজের কথাটাও বোঝেনা । বোঝেনা বলেই সংস্কারের বশবর্তী হ'য়ে বাইরে নারীপ্রগতি আন্দোলনের বিরোধিতা করে । আবার অন্যদিকে শিক্ষিত মানুষ সুযোগ পেলেই নারীপ্রগতি সম্পর্কে বক্তৃতা দিয়ে আসর সরগরম কবে, অথচ নিজের স্বীকে বাড়ীতে আড়াল করে রাখে—এই তার মধ্যে অদ্ভুত দ্বন্দ্ব । তাই শরৎচন্দ্র বলছেন, পুরুষের নিজের উন্নতি ও অগ্রগতির জন্য, স্বাধীনতা ও বুদ্ধির বিকাশের জন্য নারীর স্বাধীনতা, শিক্ষাদীক্ষার উন্নতি ও নারীষের বিকাশের দরকার নারী নিজের প্রয়োজনের কথাটা না হয় বাদই দিলাম । এই হ'ল তাঁর বাচনভঙ্গী এবং এইভাবে বিষয়গুলোকে তিনি তুলে ধরতে চেয়েছেন ।

.....রমা, কিরণময়ী, সাবিট্রী, রাজলক্ষ্মী এদের পরিণতির কথা স্মরণ করে অনেকে বলে থাকেন, শরৎসাহিত্যে দৈহিক প্রয়োজনকে অস্বীকার করা হয়েছে । শরৎচন্দ্র নাকি মূলতঃ 'সন্তোষ', বিরোধী' এবং 'নীতিবাগীশ' । এই অত্যাধুনিক সমালোচকরা শরৎচন্দ্রকে বলছেন 'নীতিবাগীশ' । আবার ওখনকার দিনের নীতিবাগীশ গোড়া হিন্দুসমাজ তাঁকে বলত ব্যাভিচারী । এই দুই দলই খুব প্রাজ্ঞ !

স্বাধীনতা আন্দোলনের সময় বাংলাদেশ যখন পেটিবুর্জুয়া বিপ্লববাদের প্রবল প্রভাব বর্তমান ছিল তখন শবৎচন্দ্র আমাদের মনকে ছেঁষে ছিলেন। তখন আমরা শবৎসাহিত্যে সীতাই অনুগণের সঙ্গে পড়েছি। এখনও সময় পেলেই ফাঁকে ফাঁকে কিছু পড়ার চেষ্টা করি, তাই সংস্কৃত পত্রিকাতেও মনো গাথা হয়ে আছে। শ্রীকান্ত'র চতুর্থ পর্বে বাজলক্ষ্মী এক জায়গায় শ্রীকান্তকে বলছে : "তোমাকে কি বিনামূল্যে অর্মানি অর্মানি দেব। এই স্বপ্ন পবিত্র কবিতা। আর আমিও যে তোমার জীবনে সত্যি করে এসেছিলাম, যাবার আগে সেই আসার চিহ্ন বেখে যাবোনা। এমনি নিশ্চিন্দা চলে যাবে।" বহুতাই আমি তা হতে দেবনা।' একথা শুনে শ্রীকান্তের মন প্রকায় মেহে আসে হ'য়ে উঠে। এই কথাই মনে কি ইঙ্গিত লুক্কায়িত আছে ' সেই ইঙ্গিত কাদের জন্য লুক্কায়িত আছে ' পাবশালাব লোকদের জন্য, না বিপ্লবীদের জন্য। আর এ কমনওয়েল বিপ্লবের যাবা এই কথাই পিছনে কি ইঙ্গিত লুক্কায়িত আছে ' কমন শিল্পসম্মত উচ্চমানের পদার্থ তাকে বলা হ'লে ও দর্শন পাবেনা। এই প্রকাশভঙ্গিমা উচ্চমানের বসিক লোব না হ'লে ধবংস পাবে না। দেহকে কে এখানে অস্বীকার করেছে ' এ হ'লে ও অন্যতম সত্যসম্মত শ্রীপ স্তকে বসতে : বান কথা কইতে কইতে তুমি ধুমিয়ে পড়লে। আমার গলাব ওপর থেকে তোমার হাতখানি সঁপিয়ে বেখে আসে ডেই বসলুম ' ভেবে হ'লে উঠে এলম। ভাগ্যে কৃষ্ণকর্ণের নিদ্রা অল্পে ভাঙেনা নইলে লোভেব পশে তোমাকে জাগিয়ে ফেলোতলুম। আর বি ' বসেই ইতি। শবৎচন্দ্র নিজেই বলেছেন শব্দ লিখতে পাবাই সাহিত্যিকমত না। সময়মত লেখনী সংযত ব'বা না থামতে পারাও সাহিত্যবাদের এবটা ধর্ম এবং ক্ষমতা। ঠিক কোন জায়গাটায় থামলে তবে তা আরো রসঘন হবে এবং উচ্চমানের সৃষ্টি করতে সাহায্য করবে বোঝা দরকার। নীচুমানের বসিক লোকদের কাছে তো বাজলক্ষ্মী কি কবল তা নেওড়তে পারে না নিনে আর বসন্ত হ'লে হবে না। অথচ সত্যিকারের বসন্তাহীদের তা পড়তে গিয়ে মাথার চুল একবারে খাড়া হয়ে যাবে। তাদের কাছে এ বিপ্লবের ব্যাপার। শবৎচন্দ্র উন্নত বুদ্ধিসম্মত সৃষ্টিবাদের কাববার করেছেন সৃষ্টিবাদের কাববার করেন নি।

শবৎচন্দ্রের আর একটা ছোট এবং সাধারণ গল্প 'বৈবৃষ্টির উইল'। ইন্টেলেকুয়ালদের মতে এটা কেবলমাত্র একটা গল্পই তাই পিছনে ভাবনাচিন্তার খোঁজও এমন কিছু নেই। তা সত্ত্বেও আমরা অন্তত এইখানা পড়তে গেলেই দাবুণ বিপত্তির সামনে পড়তে হয়। যদি খুব তন্ময় হ'য়ে পড়ি তবে কোনমতেই আমি আরবগকে সংযত করতে পারি না। কাবণ বইটার ভিতরে লুকিয়ে আছে একটা হাবানো জিনিস যা আমরা আজও চাইছি কিন্তু পাইনা। পুরাণে দিনের ভ্রাতৃত্বের একটা সত্যিকারের মাধুর্যময় ছবি এই বইখানাতে পাওয়া যায়। আমাদের দেশে তখনকার সামাজিক অবস্থায় বহু দোষের দিক ছিল ঠিক কথা। কিন্তু গুণের দিকও ছিল। সামন্ততান্ত্রিক অর্থনীতিকে ভিত্তি করে আমাদের দেশে তখনকার দিনে যে একাধিকতা পবিবাবগুলি ছিল, সেই পবিবাবগুলির মধ্যে ভাইয়ে-ভাইয়ে এবং ভাই-বোনে ছিল মধুর সম্পর্ক। সামন্ততান্ত্রিক অর্থনীতি ভেঙেছে, একাধিকতা পবিবাবও ভেঙেছে এবং জায়গায় ব্যক্তিগত পবিবাব এসে গিয়েছে। এগুলো প্রগতির ধারাতেই এসেছে। কিন্তু এই একাধিকতা পবিবাবের মধ্যে দ্বন্দ্ব সংঘাতকে কেন্দ্র করে যে সুন্দর মধু উপাচ পড়েছিল তাব বস আজও পবিবাবের বদলে আমরা চেখে চেখে খাই। গোকুলকে দেখে কেবলই মনে হয় হোক অস্ত্র এবং অশিক্ষিত আমাদেরও যদি এমন একটা ভাই থাকত।

গোকুলের চরিত্রচারণা মধ্য দিয়ে শবৎচন্দ্র আর একটা যে বড় জিনিস দেখাতে চেয়েছেন তা হল, কেবলমাত্র পুঁথিগত বিদ্যা বা উচ্চ ডিগ্রী থাকলেই সংস্কৃতির সত্যিকারের স্বপ্ন এবং আসল সুগতি অসম্ভব করা যায়না। গোকুলের ছোট ভাই বিনোদ বিএ-তে ফাস্ট ক্লাস সোনার মেডেল পেয়েছে যার জন্য গোকুল নিজেও গৌরবান্বিত-সেই বিনোদ কি সত্যিকারের সংস্কৃতির কোন স্বপ্ন বাবে সে তার নির্যাস চাক্রেও কি যথার্থ সম্মান দিতে জানে। সে বাইরের আচরণে লোক দেখানো ভদ্রতা ও শালীনতা বজায় রাখে ও শিক্ষিত মাত্র। সংস্কৃতির আসল স্বপ্ন সে বড়ো বড়ো বাবে। আর গোকুল শিক্ষার অভাবে আরো তাবোব ব'লে কিন্তু সত্যিকারের সম্মানের ও সংস্কৃতির খোঁজ আসল দিক তা সে অশিক্ষিত হ'য়েও কিন্তু অসম্ভব করতে পেরেছে। তাই সে তার মা এবং ভাইকে মরণোত্তর দিতে জানে সমস্ত মানুষকেই সম্মান দিতে জানে। কিন্তু বিনোদ শিক্ষিত হ'য়েও এ জিনিস জানে না।

গোকুলের চরিত্র একে এই সত্যটিকেই শবৎচন্দ্র দেখাতে চেয়েছেন। আর দেখাতে চেয়েছেন, প্রকৃত ভ্রাতৃত্ব কী। একথা ঠিক যে সত্যিকারের ভ্রাতৃত্বের সৌন্দর্য দেখানো সত্ত্বেও সে সামাজিক কাঠামোকে ভিত্তি করে তাব বিকাশ ঘটেছিল, সেই সমাজ আব ফিরে আসবে না। আত্ম পবিবর্তিত সমাজে একাধিকতা পবিবাবের বদলে ব্যক্তিগত পবিবাব গড়ে উঠেছে। কিন্তু তা সত্ত্বেও ভাইয়ে-ভাইয়ে সেই সুন্দর সম্পর্কটা না থাকার কাবণ কি? একেব অন্যের উপরে আধিক নির্ভরশীলতা না থাকলে ভালবাসার ও নুর্ভূতন মেহের সম্পর্কের ক্ষেত্রে তো আগের থেকে উন্নত জিনিসটাই আসার কথা। আগে যা ছিল তাব থেকে হীনস্বার্থসম্পন্ন, নিম্নবর্গের জিনিস আসবে কেন? তাই শবৎচন্দ্র গোকুলকে এমন একটা মানুষ হিসাবে গড়ে তুলেছেন যে, তাব নিজের উপরে শত

অপমান করলেও, তার ক্ষমতা থাকা সত্ত্বেও সে কোন মানুষকে অপমান করে না। মানুষকে সে যথার্থই ভালবাসে এবং কিভাবে অন্যকে ভালবাসা দিতে হয় লেখাপড়া না জেনেও সে তা আয়ত্ত করেছে। ফলে, বুঁচির মূল জিনিসটা সে আয়ত্ত করেছে। তাই মায়েব সম্মত কিভাবে রক্ষা করতে হয় তা সে জানে। তার স্বশর হাজার চেষ্ঠা ক'বেও ভুলিয়ে ভালিয়ে তাকে দিয়ে এব মায়েব অমতে কাজ করতে পারে না। এব নিজেব জ্বীও পারে না। অথচ আমাদেব দেশেব শিক্ষিত, বুঁচিবান, বনীন্দ্রসংস্কৃতিব উদগাতাবা পর্যন্ত জ্বীর অন্যায় আবদারে কও কাণ্ড ক'বছে। আব একটা অশিক্ষিত লোক, যাকে কথাব পাঁচো ফেলেন, সব ক'বনো যায় ব'লে মানুষ মনে করে, তার একটা জায়গায় কেমন অতিস্বচ্ছ মর্গাদানো! তাকে সেখান থেকে কোনমতেই বেঁচে নড়াতে পারে না।

গোকুলেব স্বশর এব মেয়েকে হাত ক'বে গোকুলকে বোঝায়ে দোকানেব চাঁদ হাত ক'বে ফেলোঁছিল এবং পুবাগো ক'বচাঁপী চক্রবর্তীকে ওড়ানাব সমস্ত পাবকস্পনাট পাকাপাকি ক'বে ফেলোঁছিল। সে গোকুলকে ভূঁইয়া-ভালিয়া ঠিক বোঝিয়ে দিয়েছিল যে, সংমা এব সর্বনাশ করছে, চক্রান্ত ক'বছে এবং এই সর্বনাশেব হাত থেকে তাকে বাচতে হ'লে চক্রবর্তীকে দোকান থেকে সবচেঁতই হ'লে। গোকুলও এব অশিক্ষা ও বুদ্ধিব দোমে এদেব চারুণেব ফাদে পা দিয়ে ফেলল এবং বৃক্স ফেলল যে, হ্যাঁ হ্যাঁ হ্যাঁ, এঁতা সংমা, সেই এনাই তাকে দেখতে পারে না। স্বশুরেব ও বোয়িব পবামর্শে সে চক্রবর্তীব কাহ থেকে দোকানেব চাঁদ নিয়ে গেল। গোকুলেব স্বশর বৃক্সল যে, সব ঠিকঠাক হ'য়ে গেল, জামাই এব কুঁক্ষিত হ'য়ে গেল। গোকুলেব বোঁও খা খশী হল। সেও ভাল যে, মাক এতদিনে মাদেব বজ্রা থেকে সে এব মাদীকে নিজেব অন্যেও আনতে পেয়েছে। ফলে, এব মাদেও এবটি প্রাণ বিসংগদ হ'ল।

অথচ যে গোকুলকে এব বোঁ চিনতে পারেনি, স্বশুর চিনতে পারেনি ম'ও চিনতে পারেনি সেই গোকুলকে দোকানেব সামান্য কর্মচারী হ'য়েও চক্রবর্তী কিছু ঠিকই চিনেছিল। সে কোন কথা না ব'ল হংকণাং গোকুলেব মাদেব কাছ হাটব হ'য়ে সব ঘটনা তাকে জানাল। মা যখন এসে ডাকলেন, 'গোকুল', গোকুল বিপ্ত হংকণাং সদস্ত ভূঁই গিয়ে হাতান্ত সন্তুষ্ট হ'য়ে জবাব দিল, 'কি মাদ?' মা বললেন : "চক্রবর্তীমশাই অনেক দিনেব লোক, তিনি যতদূর বাঁচলেন আমি ততদূর তাবে বহাল রাখলুম। সিন্দুরেব চাঁদ খাতাপত্র নিয়ে তাঁকে দোকানে যেতে দাও।" গোকুল অমনি বনাত ব'লে চাঁদ গোল্ছাটি ফেলে দিল। চক্রবর্তী একটু মুচাক হেসে চাঁদেব গোল্ছাটি নিয়ে চ'লে গেল। তাবপব শব্দ হ'ল গোকুলেব উপর অশেষ লাঞ্ছনা এবং হিংস্রাব। গোকুল সমস্ত কিছু নীয়ে সহ্য ক'বে ব'সে বইল। শব্দ লঙ্ঘ্য ফোঁতে কাদ বাদ হ'য়ে একটা কথাই বলল : "মা যে শত্রুতা ক'বে এমন কুঁক্স দেবেন এ আমি কি করে জানব?" দেখুন কি অশ্রুত। যে সংমা শত্রুতা ক'বছে, সর্বনাশ ক'বছে, চক্রান্ত ক'বছে এইসব কথা গোকুলকে বুঝিয়ে সব ঠিক হ'য়ে গিয়েছিল—সেই মা-ই যখন একমাত্র মাদ চক্রবর্তীকে চাঁদটা ফিঁকিয়ে দেওয়াব জন্য গোকুলকে বলে চ'লে গেলেন, অমনি সব ওলটপালট হ'য়ে গেল। বাস, আব দোকানে হাত দেওয়া চলল না। বোয়িব ক'বু, স্বশুরেব ক'বু বিছুই চলল না। এই হচ্ছে গোকুল।

শবৎচন্দ্র এই সামান্য গল্পটির মধ্য দিয়ে যে কথাটি বসতে চেয়েছেন তা হল, লেখাপড়া একটা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ জিনিস, কিন্তু সংস্কৃতিব মূল সুব শ্রুমাট উচ্চ ডিগ্রী হ'লেই আয়ত্ত ক'বতে পারা যায় না। তাই বিনোদ একজন গোল্ডমেডালিস্ট হ'য়েও যান খুব প'শানি, ম'খ গোকুল কিন্তু এব সংবাদ পেয়েছে। শব্দ এঁকে সে প্রবোধ ক'বতে গেলেন না। মানুষ তাকে ভুলভালে বোঝে, অনেক বিপত্তি সৃষ্টি হয়, ঠিক সম'য় ঠিক বগাটা গুঁটিয়ে বলতে পারে না ব'লে যা চায় তা গ'লে ক'বতে পারে না, ভেঙে যায়। এইখানেই শিক্ষাব প্রয়োজন। এইখানে তিনি বসতে চেয়েছেন, ম'খ থাব অনেক বিপদ ব'ং ম'খ থেকে কিছুই হয়না। বিপ্ত শব্দ লেখাপড়া শিখে ডিগ্রী নিলেই কি সংস্কৃতিব সৃষ্টি হয়ও ক'ব যায়? দেখ'তা, বিনোদ সংস্কৃতিবান, উচ্চ সংস্কৃতি ও মানবিক গুণেব অধিকারী না, এই মূর্খ গোকুলটা মানবিক গুণেব বেশী অধিকারী। হোমনা লেখাপড়া শিখে বিনোদ না হ'য়ে গোকুল যদি হ'তে পার, তবেই পড়াব মার্থকতা আছে। আব না পড়েও অস্তঃ গোকুল হ'তে পারেন বিনোদেব চেয়ে সনাছে এব কার্যকারিতা অনেক বেশী। সে মায়েব মর্গাদা বোঝে। যৌনভাবে সে দাস নয়। বোয়িব কথাব মাকে-ভাইকে সে বখানও পথে বসাবে না। অথচ আজকেব দিনেব আমাদেব দেশেব তথাকথিত কমুনিষ্টদেব এবং প্রগতিশীল আন্দোলনেব লোবেদে, মাকে পথে গাঁসয়ে বোঁকে নিয়ে হানাতে উঠতে দেখতে দেখতে আমার চুপ পেকে গেল। শবৎচন্দ্র এইসব ওড়নাগুলোই বলেছেন রসেব মাধ্যমে। তিনি ওড়না থা লিখে কেথাও বোঝাতে চাননি—আমি এইখানে এই তত্ত্ব আলোচনা ক'বছি, এই বক্তব্য রাখছি। সাহিত্যিক হিসেবে এইখানেই এব মার্থকতা সবচেঁতই বেশী।

ফলে, শবৎচন্দ্রেব মূল্যানা হ'লে, শবৎচন্দ্রকে খুঁটিয়ে টিয়ে পড়তে থাকলে আজকেব দিনে সমগ্র দেশে যে নৈতিক অধঃপতন ঘটেছে এবং যার প্রভাব বামপন্থী আন্দোলনেও এসে বর্তাচ্ছে, সেই নৈতিকতা একটা নতুন মানে খুঁজে পাবে। এব মাদে এবটা বিরাট পরিবর্তন আসবে। আধুনিক সাংস্কৃতিক ধ্যানধারণার মধ্যেও একটা বিরাট পরিবর্তন আসবে।



সকলেই স্বীকার করবেন, সমগ্র যুগে শ্রবে শ্রবে যে উন্নত চরিত্র, উন্নত চিন্তার সৃষ্টি হয়েছে, তারই ধারায় বুদ্ধোন্মাদ বিপ্লববাদী চিন্তাধারা থেকেও সর্বদাবার উন্নত শ্রবের চিন্তাধারার সৃষ্টি হয়েছে। তাহ'লে বুদ্ধোন্মাদ বিপ্লব যে মানুষগুলো, যে চরিত্রগুলো সৃষ্টি করেছে, সর্বদাবা বিপ্লবের মধ্য দিয়ে যে মানুষগুলো, চরিত্রগুলো সৃষ্টি করবে, সেগুলো পুরাণে দিনের 'হিউম্যানিষ্ট' বিপ্লবী, অর্থাৎ বুদ্ধোন্মাদ বিপ্লববাদের সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ চরিত্রগুলোর চেয়েও উন্নত শ্রবের চরিত্র হবে তো? অথচ আমাদের সমাজে বাস্তবে কি দেখতে পান? শবৎচন্দ্র আমলে ঐকম্যে যে কোমরভাঙা ভাবতৎবে স্বাধীনতা আন্দোলন, যাব মধ্যে কত দুর্বলতা ছিল, যে আন্দোলন ধর্ম থেকে মুক্ত হ'তে পারেনি সাম্রাজ্যবাদের বিবুদ্ধেও যাব মূল ধারায় আপোষহীন ছিলনা, যে সময়ে নেতাবাও রাজনৈতিক আন্দোলনের তাড়াতাড়ায় সন্তোষজনক ঐক্যে দাঁড়িয়েছিল বাদনৈতিক আন্দোলনের সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ বাহিনী যাবা, সবচেয়ে অগ্রণী অংশ যাবা, তাঁরাও তখন ধর্মমত সংস্কার ও ঐতিহ্যের সংস্কার আপোষ করেছেন—আপোষ করেছেন সামাজিক ক্ষেত্রে, ব্যক্তিগত ক্ষেত্রে, এমনকি পারিবারিক ক্ষেত্রেও—আমাদের মনে বাখা দাবার তখন একটা সময়েও শবৎসাহিত্যের মত সাহিত্যে কার্যকারিতা ছিল বলেই সেই আন্দোলনের ভাবধারায় যাবা প্রভাবিত হয়েছে বাংলাদেশের সেই যুবকদের মধ্যে, বিপ্লবীদের মধ্যে চরিত্রের যে দৃঢ়তা দেখতে পেয়েছি, আজ কমুনিষ্টরা, যাবা তাদের চেয়ে অনেক স্ফূর্তিসম্মত আলোচনা করেন, বিশ্লেষণ করেন, বস্তুতাবদ্ধী করেন, কিন্তু চরিত্রের সেদিনকার সেই উন্নত মানটুকু পশ্চাদ্ধাবী বজায় রাখতে পারেন না। আজকের দিনের কমুনিষ্টদের যেখানে দেশবন্ধু সি. আব. দাসের চেয়েও, ক্ষুদ্রবাসন চেয়েও উন্নত মডেলের হওয়া বখা, সেখানে সেটুকু হওয়া তে' দূর্বের কথা, তাব চেয়েও অধঃপতিত মান এ'দের। বাদনৈতিক কারণ হ'চ্ছ এদেশে শবৎসাহিত্যের যথার্থ মূল্যায়ন করতে না পারা, এমনকি তথাকথিত প্রগতিশীলদের দ্বারা তাঁর অস্বীকারিতা মানস শবৎচন্দ্রকে ঠিকমত বুঝতে না পারা। এব ফলেই অতীতের থেকে ছেদ করতে গিয়ে আমরা 'কনটিনিউয়িটি'র সুবটি হারিয়ে ফেলেছি এবং ভ্রমমূল হ'ল পড়েছি।

যে গোকুলকে বুঝতে পারেনি, যাবা গোকুলই হ'তে পারল না—চূড়ান্ত বোকাখি এবং অশিক্ষার দরুণ তাব আপাতদৃষ্ট অশাসনীয় উক্তি ও অর্থহীন আচরণের মধ্যেও যে একটা সুদৃঢ় সাংস্কৃতিক মান ও নৈতিক আধার বর্তমান তা যাবা লক্ষ্য করতে পারল না, তাব থেকে যাবা কিছুই শিখতে পারলনা তাবা কি কোনদিন কমুনিষ্ট হ'তে পারে? গিরীশ এবং যাদবই যাবা হ'তে পারল না—তারা কখনও কমুনিষ্ট হ'তে পারে না। আমাদের সমাজে যাদবকে গিরীশকে যে বোঝে, বুঝে যে তাব সবটুকু বস নিংড়ে নিয়ে তাব সীমাবদ্ধতা বুঝতে পাবে তার থেকে আরও এগিয়ে গিয়েছে, সেই তো হবে কমুনিষ্ট। যাবা গোকুলই হ'তে পারেনি—যাবা বিনোদ এবং হাবিশের জাত—গোকুলের চরিত্রে যে সংস্কৃতির সুবটি নিহিত তাব খবরই যাবা বাখেনা, তাবা কমুনিষ্টদের বুকনিব আড়ালে কমুনিষ্ট হয় নাকি? বিনোদের দল, হাবিশের দল কমুনিষ্ট হয়না। গোকুল, যাদব, গিরীশের দলই বিকাশের পথে কমুনিষ্ট হয়। নারীদের মধ্যে বিন্দু নাবাযণী, হেমাক্ষিনী, 'নিষ্কৃতি'র ছোট বো, বড় বো—এই জাতের নারীবাই সুযোগ পেলে বিকাশের পথে সত্যিকারের কমুনিষ্ট হ'তে পারে।

যেসব সাহিত্যিকবা তাদের সাহিত্যের মধ্যে অন্তঃসামর্থ্য কতগুলো বড় বড় বস্তুতা ব'বন এবং সেসব সাহিত্যসমালোচক সেই সব বড় বড় কথাগুলির মাপকাঠিতেই বিচার করেন শবৎসাহিত্যের চেয়েও সেইসব সাহিত্যিকবা ব'ব বৈশী প্রগতিশীল আসল কিছু সেইসব সাহিত্যিকবা এবং সাহিত্যসমালোচকবা উভয়েই হচ্ছেন ঐ 'বৈকৃষ্ট'র উইল'—এব বিনোদ এবং 'নিষ্কৃতি'র হাবিশ ও মেজবৌয়ের জাত। এইসব সাহিত্যিকবা ও সাহিত্যসমালোচকবা শবৎচন্দ্রের বিভিন্ন গল্প-উপন্যাসের নারী ও পুরুষ চরিত্রগুলোর যথার্থ ভাবপার্থই ধবতে পারেন নি।

তাই বর্নাত্মক নাবযণীর মত মেয়েবা কমুনিষ্ট হয় নাবাযণীর মা এবং মেজবৌয়ের জাতটা কমুনিষ্ট হয় না। লেখাপড়া শিখলেও না। লেখাপড়া শিখলে এই ধবনের মেয়েবা বড় জোব 'শেষপ্রহ'র বোলা হবে, কমল হবে না। কমলের জাতটা জ্ঞান-অজ্ঞান ও অভিজ্ঞতাব ভিত্তিতে বিকাশের পথে কমুনিষ্ট হয়। বোলাব জাতটা নাবীস্বাধীনতাব অর্থ বুঝবে স্বামীব সঙ্গে বনিবনা না হলে, চুলচেরা মাখলা মোকদ্দমা কবে তাব মাইনে এবং সম্পত্তিতে কতটা ভাগ বসানো যাব। 'তুমি আমাকে বিয়ে করেছ, ডিভোর্স' হয়েছে যখন, তখন আমাকে খোবপোষ দেবে না কেন?' এইসব তথাকথিত স্বাধীনচেতা নারীরা সহজ বুদ্ধিতে এই সাধারণ কথাটা বোঝে না যে, বিয়ে হো শুধু সে আমাকে করেনি, আমিও হো তাকে করছি। খাওয়াতে হ'লে সে শুধু আমাকে খাওয়াবে কেন, আমিও হো তাকে খাওয়াব। যদি কেউ বখাধ স্বাধীনচেতা, শিক্ষিতা এবং নারীত্বের অধিকারিণী হন, নারীত্বের বিন্দুমাত্র মর্গদাবোধ যদি কারোব মধ্যে থাকে, তাহ'লে কি কোন মেয়ে বলতে পারে, 'আমাকে বিয়ে করেছ, তাহলে খাওয়াবে না কেন?' সাধারণ লেখাপড়া না জানা পুরাণে সমাজের মেয়েরা এভাবে ভাবতে পারে। তাদের আমি দোষ দই না। কিন্তু যাবা লেখাপড়া শিখেছে এবং গণতন্ত্র ও সমানারিকারের কথা বলে, তারা পর্শও এইভাবে চিন্তা ক'রে থাকে। স্কুলকলেজে পড়াশুনা

করছে। তারা এইভাবে ভাবনাচিন্তা করে থাকে! আজকের দিনের বেশীরভাগ ছেলেমেয়ের মধ্যেই ভালবাসা কি, স্নেহমমতা কি, আত্মমর্যাদাবোধ কি, নারীত্বের মূল্য কি, সে সম্পর্কে কোন ধারণা গড়ে ওঠেনি কেন? বড় বড় কথা আমাদের দেশে কম লেখক বলেছেন কি? কিন্তু শরৎচন্দ্রকে ঠিকভাবে বুঝতে পারলে চিন্তাভাবনার মোড় পালটে যাবে। প্রত্যেক বুঝবে, মর্যাদা হারিয়ে কিছু পাওয়ার মধ্যে মনুষ্যত্ব নেই। নারীরাও এইভাবে ভাববেন। খাওয়াপরা, সুখসম্পদ, যৌনজীবন, ভালবাসা, স্নেহপ্রীতিমমতা সবই মানুষের জীবনে দরকার। কিন্তু মর্যাদা হারিয়ে যিনি এগুলো পেলেন, তাঁর আর রইল কি? এইসব বোধগুলো সমাজজীবনে একেবারে মরে গেছে। শরৎচন্দ্র এই বোধগুলিকে ফিরিয়ে আনার ক্ষেত্রেও সাহায্য করবে।

অনেক ওত্থাখিত কমুনিষ্ট ও প্রগতিশীল সমালোচকদেরও বলতে শুনছি, শরৎচন্দ্র 'বিপ্রদাস' বইখানিতে হিন্দু রিভাইভালিজম-এর পৃষ্ঠপোষকতা করেছেন। আমি তাদের সঙ্গে পুরোপুরি একমত নই। আমাব মনে হয়, এ'রা 'বিপ্রদাস' বইখানা উপর-উপর পড়েছেন। ভাল করে পড়েন নি। অথবা পড়ে থাকলেও এই বইখানার মধ্যে দিয়েও শবৎচিন্তার যে মূল সুবটি বেরিয়ে এসেছে, তা তাঁরা ধরতে পারেন নি। তবে একথা সত্য, স্বাধীনতা আন্দোলনের মধ্যে হিন্দু রিভাইভালিজম-এর যে প্রভাব ছিল, শরৎচন্দ্রের একখানা উপন্যাসের মধ্যেই কেবলমাত্র আমরা তাব প্রভাব দেখতে পাই সেটি হ'ল 'বিপ্রদাস'। কিন্তু এই প্রশ্নে আলোচনার আগে যে কথাটা আমাদের মনে রাখা দরকার তা হ'ল, একজন সাহিত্যিকের মধ্যে সমাজে বড় ভাবনাধারণা ঘাটপ্রতিঘাত ঘটে থাকে। কিন্তু কোন সাহিত্যিকের সাহিত্যচিন্তার প্রকৃতি নির্ধারণের ক্ষেত্রে তাঁর সাহিত্যচিন্তার প্রধান দিকটির প্রকৃতি কি তা নির্ধারণ করা দরকার। যেমন ধবন, দোষগুণ মিলিয়েই তো মানুষ। যখন কোন মানুষকে আমরা ভাল ব'লি, তখন তাব মধ্যে এতোটুকুও কি দোষের দিক থাকে না? তাহ'লে দোষগুণে মিলিয়ে যে মানুষ, সেই মানুষকে আমরা কি দিয়ে বিচার করি? বিচার করি, তার মধ্যে গুণ ও দোষের মধ্যে কোন দিকটা প্রধান গুণের দিকটা বড়, না দোষের দিকটা বড়। যার দোষের দিকটাই বড় তাকে আমরা বলি খারাপ মানুষ। আর দোষগুণের মধ্যে যার গুণের দিকটাই বড়, তাকে আমরা বলি ভাল মানুষ। এইভাবেই যে কোন জিনিসের চরিত্র তার প্রধান দিকটা কি তা দিয়েই বিচার করতে হয়।

এই দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে বিচার করলে 'বিপ্রদাস' বইখানা সম্পর্কে পূর্বেই সমালোচকদের মতামত যদি পুরোপুরি মেনেও নেওয়া যায়, তাহ'লেও একথা অস্বীকার করার কোন উপায় নেই যে, শবৎচন্দ্রের সাহিত্যচিন্তার প্রধান দিকটাই হচ্ছে -আপোষহীন, ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ, যৌবনোদ্দীপ্ত, বিপ্লবাত্মক মানবতাবাদ।

'বিপ্রদাস' বইখানা সম্পর্কে আমার অভিমত হচ্ছে, স্বদেশী আন্দোলনের মধ্যে হিন্দু 'রিভাইভালিজম'-এর যে প্রভাব বর্তমান ছিল, তার প্রবল চাপ এড়াতে না পেয়ে শবৎচন্দ্র তাঁর যত্নে এবং অগ্রান্ত সতর্কতাব সঙ্গে বিপ্রদাস এবং দয়াময়ীর চরিত্র দুটি গড়ে তুলতে চেয়েছিলেন। তাঁর কলমেব জোয় এবং প্রকাশভঙ্গিমার অস্বাভাবিক জনাই বইখানির প্রথমদিকে চরিত্র দুটো খানিকটা উত্তরে গেলেও শেষপর্যন্ত দুটো চরিত্রই মাটি হ'য়ে গিয়েছে। চোখ থাকলেই দবা পড়বে বিপ্রদাসকে গড়ে তোলার ক্ষেত্রে শবৎচন্দ্রের এমন যে শক্তিশালী কলম, তাও যেন খতিয়ে যাচ্ছে। তাঁর লেখার যে বনধন সাবলীল তংগী বিপ্রদাস ও দয়াময়ীর চরিত্রচরণের ক্ষেত্রে তা তেমনভাবে খেলে নি। শুধু কতকগুলো কথা সাজিয়ে এবং খানিকটা ভাবগম্ভীর পরিবেশ সৃষ্টি করেই তিনি বিপ্রদাসের চরিত্রটি সুন্দর করে গড়ে তোলার আশ্রয় চেষ্টি করেছেন। অথচ যখনই বিপ্রদাস, বন্দনা, এমনকি বইয়ের মধ্যে অভ্যন্তর নগণ্য স্থান যিনি অধিকার করে নিয়েছিলেন সেই নিঃস্বপ্নে উপস্থিত করেছেন তখনই যেন তাব বলন মুখ হ'য়েছে, স্বাভাবিক গতিবেগ পেয়েছে এবং প্রকাশভঙ্গিমাও যথার্থ রসোত্তীর্ণ হয়েছে। কাজেই এটা পরিষ্কার দেখা যাচ্ছে যে, এত চেষ্টি সত্ত্বেও 'বিপ্রদাস' বইয়ে বিপ্রদাস ও দয়াময়ীর চরিত্রচরণের প্রায়স তাঁর একটা বার্ণ চেষ্টি ছাড়া আর কিছুই নয়। অতবড় ক্ষমতাসালী লেখক হওয়া সত্ত্বেও রিভাইভালিজম চরিত্র অঙ্কন করতে গিয়ে তাঁর হাতে পড়ে বিপ্রদাস ও বিপ্রদাসের মা—এই দুটি চরিত্রই মাটি হ'য়ে গেছে। বাস্তবজীবনে এই উপন্যাসে মহৎ হ'য়ে যারা ফুটে উঠেছে তারা না বিপ্রদাস, না তার মা। শেষ পর্যন্ত বিপ্রদাস, বন্দনা, ও তার আত্মভোলা বাবার চরিত্রই বড় হ'য়ে ফুটে উঠেছে।

এইভাবে বুঝলে বোঝা যাবে, চিন্তাভাবনার ক্ষেত্রে তাঁর মানবতাবাদী দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী ও মূল্যবোধ এই বইটিতেও তাঁর অজ্ঞাতসারেই প্রধান্য পেয়েছে।

.....তৎকালীন সময়ে সাহিত্যচিন্তার ক্ষেত্রে শরৎচন্দ্র মূলতঃ একজন 'সেকুলার হিউম্যানিস্ট' ছিলেন, মাস্ত্রবাদী ছিলেন না। আমরা কমুনিষ্টরা যে চিন্তাভাবনাকে লালনপালন করি, সেই চিন্তাভাবনা বা ধ্যানধারণা শরৎসাহিত্যে প্রতিফলিত হয়নি। ফলে,

সবহাৰা সংস্কাৰিত হ'ৱা জন্ম দিয়েছেন কিনা বা মজুবচাৰীৰ বিপ্লবেৰ কথা তাঁৰ কঠে প্ৰতিধ্বনিত হয়েছে কিনা এ অন্ততঃ তাঁৰ সাহিত্য আলোচনাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰে বিচাৰ্য বিষয় নহয়। শবৎসাহিত্যেৰ বিচাৰেৰ ক্ষেত্ৰে হামেশাই যাঁৱা এই ধৰণেৰ প্ৰশ্ন তোলেন, তাঁৰা আসলে মান জ্ঞানতে শিল্পেৰ গাঁও শুব ব'বোন। আমবা আলোচনা কৰছি তখনকাৰ সামাজিক পৰিস্থিতিত জাতীয় স্বাধীনতা আন্দোলনেৰ মধো আমাদেৰ দেশে মানবতাবাদী চিন্তাধাৰাৰ সৰ্বচাইত প্ৰগতিশীল চিন্তাৰ ধাবকবাহক কাৰা ছিলেন। অৰ্থাৎ, ভাবতৰ্বে তখনকাৰ পৰিস্থিতিতে বুজা যা মানবতাবাদেৰ সৰ্বচাইত প্ৰগতিশীল চিন্তাধাৰনাকে কাৰা প্ৰতিফলিত কৰেছেন। পেটিবুজোঁয়া বিপ্লববাদীবা কি। পেটিবুজোঁয়া প্ৰবন্ধদই যদি এখনকাৰ পৰিস্থিতিতে বুজা যা মানবতাবাদেৰ সৰ্বচাইতে প্ৰগতিশীল চিন্তাৰ হ'ম থাকে তেৰে শবৎচন্দ্ৰ সেই চিন্তাকেই মূলতঃ এই সাহিত্য প্ৰতিফলিত কৰেছেন। বাজেই তেৰালীন যুগৰ বুজোঁয়া মানবতাবাদেৰ সৰ্বশ্ৰেষ্ঠ প্ৰগতিশীল চিন্তাৰ মান এবং বুচিল মানই এদেশে শবৎসাহিত্য প্ৰতিফলিত কৰেছে। তা স'ত্বে শ্ৰমিকশ্ৰমীৰ চিন্তাধাৰনাৰ কত কাঙকাছি এসে গিয়াছিল শবৎচন্দ্ৰ। শবৎচন্দ্ৰেৰ চৌপদশাৰ্টে তেৰে প্ৰবন্ধেৰ শেষ পৰ্যন্ত এ দেশে শ্ৰমিক আন্দোলনেৰ জন্ম হ'য়ে গিয়েছিল। ফলে লেনিনেৰ মত একটা সঠিক মাজবাদী নেতৃত্ব যদি সেই সময় এদেশে থাকে এবং সেই নেতৃত্ব যদি ঠিক সাইনে সাহিত্যকে প্ৰভাৱিত কৰে তেলে গোবীৰ মত শবৎচন্দ্ৰেৰ মানবতাত এদেশে হ'মত সৰহ বা সাহিত্যেৰ জন্ম হওযা একেদৰে অসম্ভা ছিল না। আৰু তেলে তে গোবীৰ চেয়ে অনেক উন্নত ধৰণে সাহিত্য এত কাৰণ শবৎচন্দ্ৰে সাপ্পাশলী গোবীৰ থেকে নিঃসন্দেহে উন্নত ধৰণে।

এ সম্পৰ্কে শবৎসাহিত্য থেকে দু একটা উদাহৰণ আৰ্ম আপনাদেৰ সামনে তুলে ধৰব। মানবতাবাদী মূণ্যবোধ এবং তেৰ লীন সমাজ উচ্চবুচিল মান প্ৰতিফলিত কৰাৰ দিক থেকে শ্ৰীকান্ত উপন্যাসেৰ সাহিত্যমূনা যাই থাকুক না কেন, শ্ৰমিক সংস্কাৰিত অগে তাৰ মূল্য বতৰু ক'বু, তবু দেখুন 'শ্ৰীকান্ত'ৰ ভূতীয় পৰ্দেৰ একটা জাৰগাৰ যেখানে বেললাইন বসানোৰ বাত চলাছিল এবং শ্ৰীকান্ত মজুবস্তীৰ মধো এবটা বাত বাটাতে বাধা হ'য়েছিল সেখানে মজুবদেৰ চুডান্ত দুববস্তা দেখে শ্ৰীকান্তৰ মগ দিয়ে যে বথটা বেঁপে এসেছে সেটা ঠিক মানবতাবাদীদেৰ মতন কথা নহয় তাৰ থেকেও উন্নত চিন্তাকে প্ৰতিফলিত কৰেছে। যেমন, শ্ৰীকান্ত মজুবদেৰ অসতীৰ্ষ অমূল্যিক দুৰ্দ্দশা দেখে বতৰে : আধুনিক সভ্যতাৰ বাতন তোৰা তোৰা মৰ। কিন্তু যে নিৰ্মন সভ্যতা তোদেৰ এমন ধাৰা ক'ৰিয়াছে, তাহাকে তোৰা কিছুতেই ক্ষমা ক'বিস না। যদি বহিৰতেই হয় ইহাকে তোৰা দুৰেপে বসাতলে বহিৰা নিয়া যা।

'পথেৰ দাবী'তেও শ্ৰমিক আন্দোলন সম্পৰ্কে শবৎচন্দ্ৰ যে দৃষ্টিভংগীৰ পৰিচয় দিয়েছেন, তা পুৰোপূৰি ম'জুবাদ সমাজ না হ'লেও নিঃসন্দেহ তে মজুব আন্দোলনে অৰ্থনীতিবাদ ও সংস্কাৰবাদেৰ বিবুদ্ধে বলিষ্ঠ প্ৰতিবাদেৰ কঠমবকে প্ৰতিফলিত কৰেছে। তিনি সেখানে পিন্ধাবতানে দোষসেছেন, যাৰা মাঁহনা বাকিব এবং কিছু কিছু সংস্কাৰেৰ চেনা মজুব আন্দোলন কৰে, বা মজুবদেৰ সংগতিত কৰে, তাৰা মজুব দৰদেৰ অলখামাৰ আডালে মজুবদেৰ সৰ্বনাশ কৰে সৰ্বচাইতে বেশী। তাৰা আসলে এই কাজেৰ দ্বাৰা বিপ্লবেৰই নিৰ্বোধিতা কৰে।

শবৎচন্দ্ৰ পথেৰ দাবী উপন্যাসে দৰ্শনেৰ দিক থেকেও নানাভাবে ক'বগলি কথা ব'লেছেন। সেই বথাগুলিৰ মাধ্যমে তিনি যেন মানবতাবাদী চিন্তাৰ সীমাকে ছাড়িয়ে য়েতে চাইছেন। আচৰকৰ দিনে কানবতাবাদী মূণ্যবোধ একটা ধাচে এসে গিয়েছে। তা ভানতল বুচি এবং সৈন্দৰ সম্পৰ্কিত ধাৰণাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰে এবটা শব্দত বৃপ বা কাঠামো দাঙ ক'ৰায়েছে। যে ধাৰণাগুলি একদিন পুৰোবাদী বিপ্লবেৰ প্ৰয়োজনে উৎপাদনেৰ বিপ্লবায়ক পৰিবৰ্তনেৰ প্ৰয়োজনে গড়ে উঠাছিল, পৰবৰ্তীকালে মানবতাবাদীবা তাক স্থায়ী, শাস্ত্ৰত হিসাবৰ ময়াদ দিয়ে এক ভাৰগাৰ দাঙ ব'বাবাৰ চেষ্টা কৰেছে। বুজোঁয়া মানবতাবাদীদেৰ সৌন্দৰ্যবোধ নীতিনিৰ্ভৰতা ও বুচি সংগ্ৰাস্ত এই ধৰণেৰ শাস্ত্ৰত ধাৰণাৰ ও ম'জুবাদীদেৰ সৌন্দৰ্যবোধ, নীতিনিৰ্ভৰতা ও বুচি সম্পৰ্কিত ধাৰণাৰ সাজ ঐতিহাসিক ধাৰাবাহিকতাৰ একটা সংযোগ থাকেলেও এই দুটি আসলে সম্পূৰ্ণ আলাদা আদৰ্শত ক'ঠামো। বন্ধমূলক বস্তুবাদ যে প্ৰয়োজনাত্মক কথা ব'লে, তা বাস্তব থেকে উদ্ভূত। ম'জুবাদ অনযাথী যে প্ৰয়োজনাত্মক আলাকে সমাজেৰ ভাব, আদৰ্শ, চিন্তাধাৰনাগুলোৰ সত্যসত্য নিৰ্ণায়িত হয়, তা বাক্তিব হাঁন স্বাৰ্থবোধ বা প্ৰয়োজন নহয়। পথেৰ দাবীতে দেখুন অনেকটা এইবৃপ যুক্তিধাৰা ও চিন্তাধাৰাবই যেন প্ৰতিফলন ঘটেছে। যদিও তাৰ মধো চিন্তাৰ প্ৰধান দিকটাই বুজোঁয়া বিপ্লববাদ, এদেশেৰ বিশেষ পৰিস্থিতিতে 'এনাৰ্জ'ন' যে বৃপ পৰিগ্ৰহ কৰাছিল তে এবং যৌবনোদ্দীপ্ত মানবতাবাদই প্ৰতিফলিত হ'য়েছে, তবুও অনেক জাৰগাৰেই তাঁৰ এই বহিৰাণতে তিনি মানবতাবাদী চিন্তাকেও ছাড়িয়ে য়েতে চেয়েছেন এবং কৰ্মানিষ্ট চিন্তাধাৰা এবং বিচাৰধাৰাব কিছু কিছু জিনিষ যেন বিদূৰচমকেৰ মত তাৰ মধো থানিকটা জাৰগা ক'ৰে নিয়েছে। 'পথেৰ দাবী'তে এক জাৰগাৰ সৰ্বসাচীৰ মুখ দিয়ে তিনি ব'লেছেন : "এই পৰিৱৰ্তনশীল জগতে সত্যোপলব্ধি

বলিয়া কোন নিতা বস্তু নাই। তাহাব জন্ম আছে, মৃত্যু আছে। যুগ যুগে কাল কালে মানবের প্রয়োজনে তাহাৰে নতুন হইয়া আসিতে হয়। অতীতের সভ্যক বর্তমানে স্নীক্য কবিগণেই হইবে—এ বিশ্বাস দ্রাশ্ব এ ধারণা কুসংস্কার।” শব্দচন্দ্রের সভ্য সম্পর্কে এই ধরণের চিন্তাভাবনা ও বিচারধারার মধ্যে স্বল্পমূলক বস্তুবাদ ও বস্তুনিষ্ঠ চিন্তাভাবনা ও বিচারধারার যথেষ্ট প্রভাব পৰিলক্ষিত হয়।

পথের দাবী'র আর একটা জায়গায় সবাসাচী বন'ছেন পথের দাবীর ভাস্কর্য্য দিয়েই আমায় সত্য-নিষ্ঠা নির্ধারিত হয়। এই আমায় নীতিশাস্ত্র এষ্ট আমায় অকপটমূর্তি। তেমনবা বল চাই সত্য পক্ষ সত্য' এই অর্থটান নিশ্চল শব্দগুলো তোমার কাছে মহামূল্যবান। মথ ভোলাবাব এতো বড় যাদুকর আপনাই। আমি কিংবা বিনোদ প্রয়োজনে সভ্য সৃষ্টি করি।' অর্থাৎ তিনি 'ললিত চাইছেন দেশের স্বাধীনতার প্রয়োজনে পথের দাবী সংগঠনের প্রয়োজন ও প্রয়োজনের আঁড়ত। আর স্বাধীনতার প্রয়োজনে সভ্য ভাবের সর্বজনীন কলাগণ প্রস্তুতি আঁড়তে আছে। তাই সা পথের দাবীর প্রয়োজন তা স্বাধীনতার প্রয়োজন এবং স্বাধীনতার প্রয়োজন তাই ই সবাসাচী'র কাছে সত্য। দেখুন তাব পথেই আমায় তিনি বন'ছেন : 'সবাসাচী'র প্রয়োজন এবং ব্রহ্মেন্দ্র'র প্রয়োজন এক নয়।' অর্থাৎ এখানে সত্যবাদের নৈর্বাঙ্কিক প্রয়োজনের সঙ্গে তিনি তাঁর ব্যক্তি-প্রয়োজনের পার্থক্য নির্ণয় করে দেখাতে চেষ্টা করেন। তা নাহ'লে যে কোন মানসই তা তাব ব্যক্তি প্রয়োজনটাকেই সভ্য বলে চালাতে পারে। তাই প্রয়োজন বলতে যে কোন মানুষের ব্যক্তিগত প্রয়োজন-উপলব্ধিকে তিনি বোঝাতে চাননি। সমাজ, মানস এবং ইতিহাসের যেটা নির্বিশেষ এবং সত্যবাদের প্রয়োজন, তিনি সে প্রয়োজনটাকেই ইংগিত করেছেন। ওই সবাসাচী ভাবটিকে বোঝাচ্ছেন স্বাধীনতার জন্য প্রয়োজন হলে বস্তুর গোটা খেন'তে হবে এবং তাব জন্য দরকার হলে মানুষও খুন করতে পারি। কিন্তু সবাসাচী'র প্রয়োজন এবং ব্রহ্মেন্দ্র'র প্রয়োজন এক নয়।' এই দুইজন'র প্রয়োজন সম্পর্কিত উপলব্ধি এক নয় বলেই ব্রহ্মেন্দ্র ব্যক্তিগত আকোশে মানুষ খুন করে। নিজের বিপদ থাকে আর না থাকে, খুন করার সুযোগ পেলেই সে মানুষ খুন করে। আর যে সবাসাচী'র জীবন অপর বিশ্বাসঘাতকতার খেল চূড়ান্তভাবে বিপন্ন হ'য়ে পড়েছিল, তিনিই অপূর্বক সগচেয়ে বেশী উদারতা দেখালেন। অন্য সবাই যখন অপূর্ব জীবন নেওয়ার জন্য অন্ধেব মত, যন্ত্রেব মত 'ডিসিপ্রিন'কে আঁকড়ে ধরে ব'সে আছে—ডিসিপ্রিন ও যে প্রয়োজন থেকে উদ্ধৃত এবং তাও যে প্রয়োজন অনুসারেই পুনর্নিবাস (remoulded) হয়—এই বোধও যখন অন্যেরা হাবিয়ে ফেলে'তে তখন সবাসাচী কিছু তাব নিজের জীবন যাব জন্য বেশী বিপন্ন হয়েছিল তাকেই বাঁচিয়ে দিলেন।

এই অপূর্বক বাঁচিয়ে দেওয়ার ক্ষেত্রেও তাব যুক্তিধারা কি অস্বুত দেখুন। তিনি বদা'ছেন : "অপূর্ববাবু যা করে ফেলে'ছেন, সে আর ফিরবে না। তাব ফলাফল আমাদের নিতেই হবে। শাস্ত্র দিনেও হবে না দিনেও হবে।' আজকের দিনে আমরা যেমন স্বাধীনক পদ্ধতিতে বিচার করি যে, একটা বিদ্রাস্ত লোক আমাদের অনেক অনিষ্ট করতে পারে, আমরা একটা লোক নিশ্চিতভাবে শত্রুপক্ষেব এজেন্ট হ'লেও আমাদের অনেক অনিষ্ট করতে পারে—কিন্তু এই দুটো লোককে মো-ম'য়েই এক দৃষ্টিতে দেখা যায় না। ঠিক তেমন সবাসাচী যে অপূর্বক বাঁচিয়ে দিলেন, তাব কারণ, তিনি একজন প্রকৃত বিশ্বাসঘাতক এবং একজন দুর্বল চরিত্রের মানসের মধ্যে পার্থক্য নির্ণয় করতে পেরেছিলেন। তাই তিনি অপূর্ব সম্পর্ক এক জায়গায় ভাবটিকে বন'ছেন : "ব্যক্তিগত বলিষ্ঠ গোমাকে এত ভো'ত, হীন সে কখনো নয়। লেখাপড়া শিখেছে। ভদ্রনোকেব ছেলে—পবানীনতার লজ্জা সে অনুভব করে। আ'বা দশজন বাঙ্গালীর ছেলের মত সভ্যসভাই সে স্বদেশেব কল্যাণ প্রার্থনা করে।" আর এক জায়গায় বন'ছেন : "অপূর্ব ব্রেট'র নয়, স্বদেশকে ও সমস্ত জনগণেই ভালবাসে। কিন্তু আঁকোশ—থাক, স্বজাতিব নিন্দা আর কববনা—কিন্তু বড় দুর্বল।" অর্থাৎ সবাসাচী বন'তে চাই'ছেন, এইসব 'গুনো থাকা সত্ত্বেও অপূর্ব বড় দুর্বল। আমাদের বহু বাঙ্গালীর মত অনেকটা তাব অবস্থা। কিন্তু অপূর্ব এবং ভাবটীর জীবনকে কেন্দ্র করে, যে সৌন্দর্য এবং মনুষ্য গড়ে উঠে'তে তাব নি কোন মূল্য নেই। তাই সবাসাচী ভাবটিকে বন'ছেন : 'যে বস্তু তোমাদের মত এই দটি সানানো নানানাবে উপলব্ধি করে গড়ে উঠে'তে তা কি দাম আছে না কি যে, ব্রহ্মেন্দ্র'র মত বর্ববগুলোকে দেব তাই নয় করে ফেলে'তে। শব্দ এই ভাবটী, শব্দ এই। নইলে মানুষের প্রাণের মূল্য আছে নাকি আমাদের কাছে। একটা বানাক'ড়ও না।' এই ধারণাগুলো সত্যিভাবে ফেটে তিনিই প্রথমে এ'দেশ এ'ন'ছেন।

মূলতঃ মজুবদের নিয়ে শব্দচন্দ্র সাহিত্য বচনা করেন নি। কিন্তু তিনি চাষীমজুবদের কথা একেবারেই ভাবেন নি—এ ধারণাও সত্য নয়। মজুবদের কথা তিনি অন্যান্য উপন্যাসে কিছু কিছু বলেছেন এবং 'পথের দাবী'তে মজুব আন্দোলন যথেষ্ট গুরুত্ব লাভ করে'ছে। এই প্রসঙ্গে উল্লেখ করা যেতে পারে যে, তিনি তখনকার দিনে কলকাতার আশেপাশে একটা সমাজতান্ত্রিক 'গ্রুপ'ও খাড়া করেন। এক জায়গায় শ্রমিক আন্দোলনের উদ্দেশ্য ব্যাখ্যা করতে গিয়ে তিনি হু'শিয়ারী দিয়ে বলে ন : "দেখ, আজ আম'র দেশের শ্রমিকরা জাগ্রত নয়, সংঘবদ্ধ নয়, পীড়িত এবং শোষণও তাদের উপরে অকথ্য বর্ববভাবে চলছে, আজ তোমাদের দরকার রয়েছে তাদের। জাগ্রা'ব কাজে সংঘবদ্ধ করার কাজে আত্মনিয়োগ করার জন্যে। কিন্তু জেনো যেদিন এদের ঘুম ভাঙবে, এদের ভিতরে সংঘবদ্ধতা আসবে, সেদিন ওদের নিজেরেব ভিতর থেকেই

ওদের নেতা তৈরী হবে, সেদিন তোমরা হবে অনাবশ্যক। সেদিন যাতে ওদের পরিচালনার ভার ওদের নেতাদের হাতেই ছেড়ে দিয়ে খুশী মনে চলে আসতে পাব তোমাদের মনকে এমনিভাবেই তৈরী কবে তোলা দরকার। কাজ কবাব সঙ্গে সঙ্গে যেন চিরকাল ওদের নেতৃত্ব করবার মোহ মনেব মধ্যে না জন্মায়।”

তার ‘পথের দাবী’র মধ্যে দেখ ‘ন’ শ্রমিক ধর্মঘটের উদ্দেশ্যে সঙ্কে তিনি এমন সব কথা বলেছেন, যে কথাগুলো মাত্র বাদের প্রায় কাছাকাছি শ্রেণীসংগ্রাম সঙ্কে কথা। অথচ তিনি হচ্ছেন আসলে কিছু পেটিবুর্জোয়া বিপ্লববাদের লেখক, মানবতাবাদের লেখক। কিন্তু যেহেতু সেদিন স্বাধীনতা আন্দোলনের মধ্যে মাত্র বাদ বা শ্রমিক আন্দোলনের চিন্তাভাবনাগুলো এসে থাকে দিচ্ছে, শরৎচন্দ্র বিপ্লবাত্মক মানবতাবাদের উত্তরসারক ছিলেন বলেই তাব অনেকখানি কাছাকাছি পৌছে গিয়েছিল। তাই সবাসাচীর মুখ দিয়ে তিনি ধর্ম সঙ্কে বলেছেন : “সমস্ত ধর্মই মিথ্যা আদিম দিনের কুসংস্কার। বিশ্বমানবতার এতবড় পরম শত্রু আর নেই।” অথচ আমাদের দেশের পেটিবুর্জোয়া বিপ্লববাদীদের মধ্যেও সেদিন এই চিন্তা অকম্পনীয় ছিল। শরৎসাহিত্যে এইসব জিনিসের নিহিত অর্থ কি, এ যারা অনুধাবন করতে সক্ষম হননি, সেই সব বড় কথাব ফাঁকির কারাবাণী তথাকথিত বিদ্রোহী বলে থাকেন—উনি জমিদারদের নিয়ে গম্প লিখেছেন, ‘উনি পাকশালার সাহিত্যিক’, ‘শরৎ সাহিত্যে আবার উচ্চ রস কি’, ইত্যাদি। এই ধরনের সমালোচনা হলেন সেই ধরনের ‘ইন্টেলেকচুয়াল’ (১) যারা সভাসমিতিতে বড় বড় কথা বলে এসে পরমুহূর্তেই ভাইকে সর্বশাস্ত ক’রে বিষয়সম্পত্তি আত্মসাৎ করতে বিন্দুমাত্র লজ্জাবোধ করেন না, বিধবা বোনকে খেতে দেননা এবং নিজের স্বীকে দিয়ে মা’য়েব অসম্মান ক’রে থাকেন।

শরৎসাহিত্যে আরো কিছু কিছু সুন্দর দিক আছে। সে সম্পর্কেও খানিকটা আলোচনা হওয়া দরকার। যেমন ধরুন, তার ‘শেষ প্রশ্ন’ উপন্যাস। এই উপন্যাসখানিতে বুর্জোয়া বিপ্লবের প্রথম যুগের ভালবাসাব স্বাধীনতা সম্পর্কে যে ধারণা গড়ে উঠেছিল—বুর্জোয়া বিপ্লববাদের প্রথম যুগের ভালবাসার স্বাধীনতার সেই রূপটিই তিনি ফুটিয়ে তোলবার চেষ্টা করেছেন। কিন্তু বুর্জোয়া বিপ্লববাদের স্বাধীনতার এই রূপটি অনেকটা একদেশদর্শী। ইউরোপের বুর্জোয়া স্বাধীন মানসিকতার নামে যে ধরনের চর্চা করেছে, তা বিলাসিতায় পর্যবসিত হয়ে গিয়েছিল। শরৎচন্দ্র তার ‘শেষ প্রশ্ন’ উপন্যাসে পুরাণে কৃপমতুকা, ধর্মাত্মতা, কোন কিছুকে অনুশাসনের মাধ্যমে চিরস্থায়ী ক’রে পাবার চেষ্টা, এই ধরনের মানসিকতাপ্রাণের বিরুদ্ধে কমলকে অতি যত্নে সুন্দরভাবে তুলে ধরেছেন। এরই সাথে সাথে কমলের একদেশদর্শিতার দিকটা দেখাবার জন্য রাজেনকে এনে খাড়া করেছেন। এই ধরনের চিন্তা কিন্তু আমবা অভীতের মানবতাবাদী সাহিত্যে পাবনা, রেনেসাঁয়ুগের সাহিত্যেও পাবনা—পাব একমাত্র শরৎসাহিত্যে।

‘শেষ প্রশ্ন’ উপন্যাসে রাজেন কমলকে বলছে, হরেন্দ্র’র আশ্রম ছেড়ে সে চলে যাবে। সে বলছে : “তাদের সঙ্গে আমার মতেও মেলেনা, কাজের ধারাতেও মেলেনা। মেরে শুষু ভালবাসা দিয়ে।” তখন কমল বলছে : “এব চেয়ে আর বড় কি আছে রাজেন ? মন যেখানে মিলেছে, থাক না সেখানে মতের অমিল। হোক না কাজের ধারা বিভিন্ন : কি যায় আসে তাতে ? সবাই একই রকম ভাববে, একই রকম কাজ করবে—তবেই এক সংগে বাস করা চলবে—এ কেন ?” আর, পরের মতকে যদি শ্রদ্ধা করতেই না পারা গেল ত সে কিসের শিক্ষা ?” কমলের প্রশ্নের রাজেন বলছে : “মনেব মিলটাকে আমি তুচ্ছ করি না। কিন্তু ওকেই অধীতীয় বলে উচ্চৈশ্বরে ঘোষণা করাও হয়েছে আজকালকাব একটা উচ্চাঙ্গের পদ্ধতি। সংসাবে যেন শুষু কেবল মনটাই আছে। আর, তার বাইবে সব যায়, সব ছায়াবাজি। এটা ভুল।” দেখুন, যে কমল ‘শেষ প্রশ্ন’ উপন্যাসে তাব অকাটা যুক্তিতে একে একে সবাইকে পরাজিত করল, তাকে রাজেন কেমন জোর চেপে ধরেছে। কমলের বক্তব্য হচ্ছে, যেন মনই একমাত্র সব—অনুষ্ঠান, মত, এগুলি কিছুই নয়। সেখানে রাজেন কমলকে বলছে : “আপনি বিভিন্ন মতবাদকে শ্রদ্ধা করতে পারাটাকেই মস্তবড় শিক্ষা বলছিলেন, কিন্তু সর্বপ্রকার মতকেই শ্রদ্ধা করতে পারে কে জানেন ? যার নিজের কোন মতের বালাই নেই। শিক্ষার দ্বারা বিরুদ্ধ মতকে নিঃশেষে উপেক্ষা করা যায় : কিন্তু শ্রদ্ধা করা যায়না।” অর্থাৎ, সে বলতে চাইছে, শিক্ষার দ্বারা বিরুদ্ধ মতকে সহ্য করা যায়, বরদাস্ত করা যায়—যেটাকে আমরা বলি বিরুদ্ধ মতের প্রতি ‘ফিলসফিক্যাল টলারেন্স’, তার বক্তব্য সেই চিন্তাব কত কাছাকাছি। কিন্তু, অপরের মতকে শ্রদ্ধা করতে সেই পারে যার নিজের মতের কোনও বালাই নেই।

আবার সে বলছে, মনের মিলটাই সব নয়, বাইরের অনুষ্ঠানটাও অনেকখানি। তাই তার কমলের কাছে বক্তব্য হ’ল, এই যে শিবনাথ এবং কমলের এতবড় একটা ভালবাসা এত সহজে চলে গেল, তা হয়তো বাইরের অনুষ্ঠানটা মিথ্যা ছিল বলেই। সে কমলকে বলছে, এই মিথ্যা থাকার ঘটনাটার ভালবাসা চলে যাওয়ার পিছনে কতটা অবদান আছে তা কি একবার ভেবে দেখেছ ? কারণ, তারও একটা ভূমিকা আছে। আবার অনুষ্ঠানটা ঠিক মত হ’লেও যে ভালবাসা চলে যেতে পারত না তাও নয়। কিন্তু অনুষ্ঠানসূতীর যে ভালবাসা চলে যাবার পিছনে একেবারে কোন অবদানই ছিলনা, একথাও বলা চলেনা। এরপর রাজেন তার মত যুক্তি ক’রে

বলছে যে, আমার মনের মিল, মনের ঐক্য নিয়েই কারবার। মনের মিল নিয়ে মাথা ঘামাইনা। এটা হ'ল এক ধরনের ব্যক্তিক বন্ধুবাদী চিন্তা।

.....'পথের দাবী'র সব্যসাচীকেও শরৎচন্দ্র অনেকটা এইভাবেই চিত্রিত করেছেন। ঔদার্যের জিনিষ যখন যতটুকু চোখে পড়েছে, তাকেই তিনি মর্যাদা দিয়েছেন। কিন্তু তিনিও মনের অনুভূতি নিয়ে ভাববার তেমন অবসর পাননি, চিন্তাও করেন নি। তাই সুমিত্রা তাকে একটা ঢাকা দেওয়া বয়লাবের সঙ্গে তুলনা করেছিল—যে ঢাকা দেওয়া বয়লাবটা বাইরে থেকে নিরুত্তাপ এবং ঠাণ্ডা মনে হ'লেও ভেতরে তার আগুন দাউ দাউ করে জ্বলছে। ভারতীকে নিয়ে সুমিত্রা যখন কারখানা পরিদর্শন করছে, তখন বয়লাবের ঢাকনিটা খুলে যাওয়া মাত্রই ভিতরের আগুনটা প্রচণ্ড শক্তি নিয়ে গম গম করছিল। সেটা দেখবার পর সুমিত্রাও একটা দীর্ঘনিঃশ্বাস পড়ল। সে ভারতীকে বলছে : “দিদি, এটা যন্ত্রটাকে চিনে রাখ, তোমাদের ডাক্তারবাবুকে চিনতে পারবে।” মানে, সুমিত্রা বলছে যে, ডাক্তারবাবুও ঐরকম একটা যন্ত্র। যার ভিতরে শুধু স্বাধীনতার আকাঙ্ক্ষা দাউ দাউ করে জ্বলছে, আর সব কিছুই পুড়ে ছাই হ'য়ে গেছে—স্নেহ-প্রেমপ্রীতি সমস্ত কিছুই। কিন্তু সব্যসাচীর সমস্ত কিছুই সে ছাই হ'য়ে যায়নি তার প্রমাণ অপূর্ব প্রাণদান। তার প্রমাণ ভারতীর সঙ্গে তাঁর অমন স্নেহময় মধুর সম্পর্ক। কিন্তু এ নিয়ে বেশী মাথা ঘামানো বা বিলাস করার অবকাশ তাঁর ছিল না। রাজেনও প্রায় অনুরূপ। শরৎচন্দ্রের এইসব চরিত্রচিত্রণের ক্ষেত্রে ব্যক্তিকতার প্রভাব আছে। কিন্তু তা সত্ত্বেও এ ঘটনা দিয়ে আমি দেখাতে চাইছি যে, অতীতের ইউরোপের মানবতাবাদী সাহিত্য, যা ভালবাসার স্বাধীনতা নিয়ে লড়েছে তার যে একদেশদর্শিতা—সেই একদেশদর্শিতা থেকে শরৎচন্দ্র মুক্ত ছিলেন। সেটাও তখনকার সামাজিক পরিস্থিতিতে অনেক বিপ্লবাত্মক ভূমিকা পালন করেছে।

..... আমাদের দেশে আজ যদি যুগের প্রয়োজনের দিকে লক্ষ্য রেখে সর্বহারা সংস্কৃতি, সর্বহারা সাহিত্য, যাকে আমরা বলতে পারি এদেশের রবীন্দ্রোত্তর, শরৎ-উত্তর সাহিত্য, তা যদি গ'ড়ে তুলতে হয়, তা তখনই গ'ড়ে তোলা সম্ভব যখন মানবতাবাদী সাহিত্যের ঐ সবচেয়ে বিপ্লবাত্মক ধারাটি, যা শরৎসাহিত্যে প্রতিফলিত হয়েছে, তাকে আপনারা অনুধাবন করতে সক্ষম হবেন এবং তাকে সম্পূর্ণভাবে নিঃশেষিত করে ফেলতে পারবেন। অর্থাৎ, তার রস সম্পূর্ণভাবে নিঃশেষ নিয়ে তাকে হজম করে তার ছোবড়া ফেলে দিতে পারবেন। তখনই আপনারা আজকের যুগের উন্নততর সর্বহারা সংস্কৃতির জগৎ দিতে পারবেন। কারণ, সর্বহারা সংস্কৃতি মানবতাবাদী সংস্কৃতির থেকে নিম্নস্তরের হ'লে—অর্থাৎ, রবীন্দ্র-শরৎসাহিত্যের থেকে নিম্নস্তরের বুঁচির মানকে প্রদর্শিত করলে—তা শুধু চলবে না তা নয়, এ মূল আন্দোলনেরও কোমর ভেঙ্গে দেবে এবং তা শেষ পর্যন্ত বুর্জোয়াদেরই সুবিধা করে দেবে। বুর্জোয়া সমাজকে প্রমিত কখনো ভাঙতে পারেনা তার থেকে ছোট জিনিষ দিয়ে। বুর্জোয়া মানবতাবাদ যা সৃষ্টি করেছে, আদর্শের ক্ষেত্রে, রাজনীতির ক্ষেত্রে, সাহিত্যের ক্ষেত্রে সমস্ত দিক থেকে তার চাইতে উন্নততর জিনিষ দিয়ে যখন আঘাত করা যাবে, কেবলমাত্র তখনই প্রমিত আন্দোলন বুর্জোয়া সমাজব্যবস্থাকে ভাঙতে পারবে। কাজেই তদানীন্তন সমাজে সবচেয়ে বিপ্লবাত্মক মানবতাবাদী চিন্তা যে সাহিত্যে প্রতিফলিত হয়েছে এবং চিন্তা, শিম্পগত মান এবং রসসৃষ্টির ক্ষেত্রে সেই সাহিত্য যে উচ্চমান গ'ড়ে তুলেছে, আজকের দিনের সর্বহারা সংস্কৃতির উত্তরসাধকরা যদি সেই সাহিত্যকে উপযুক্তভাবে অনুধাবন করতে না পারেন, তাহ'লে সর্বহারা শ্রেণীর সাহিত্যও তাঁরা ফরমুলামাফিক তৈরী করবেন, তা'ও স্বরূপ তাঁরা ধরতে পারবেন না।

.....শরৎসাহিত্যকে আমরা ঠিকমত উপলব্ধি করলে আজকের প্রগতিশীল আন্দোলনে নীতিনৈতিকতার একটা ভিত্তি তৈরী হবে। পরস্পর মতগুলোর সংঘর্ষের মধ্য দিয়ে সত্যকে পাওয়ার একটা রাস্তাকে আমরা খুঁজে পাব। শরৎচন্দ্রকে বিশ্বস্ত হওয়ার ফলেই আজকের দিনের রাজনৈতিক আন্দোলন, গণআন্দোলন, সাহিত্য-আন্দোলনের ক্ষেত্রে নীতিনৈতিকতা, বুঁচিসংস্কৃতির উঁচু মানটা নেমে গিয়েছে। যে উঁচু মানটা একসময়ে এদেশে গ'ড়েও উঠেছিল, তা ধূলিসাৎ হ'য়ে গিয়েছে। ফলে, আমরা ছিন্নমূল হ'য়ে গিয়েছি। তাই আমরা বড় কথা বলি, কিন্তু বড় হৃদয়বৃত্তির কারবার করি না। কোন আন্দোলনই তো শুধুমাত্র বুঁচির কারবার নয়—বুদ্ধি এবং হৃদয়বৃত্তির কারবার। বিপ্লবটাও তাই। চিন্তা এগিয়ে যাচ্ছে, সেখানে হৃদয়বৃত্তির আধারটা নীচু স্তরে নেমে থাকলে তো ব্যবধান হ'য়ে যাবে। তাহ'লে আন্দোলন এবং চিন্তাও শেষ পর্যন্ত বিপথগামী হবে। ফলে, পথ পাওয়া যাবেনা। আজকের দিনে ভারতবর্ষের গণআন্দোলনের স্তরে স্তরে যে নীতিনৈতিকতা নেই, এ সত্য আমি অত্যন্ত বেদনার সঙ্গে লক্ষ্য করছি। আপনারা জানান, আমি রাজনীতি করি। আমি একজন বামপন্থী আন্দোলন এবং সাম্যবাদী আন্দোলনের লোক। এ'রা আমাকে কেন সাহিত্যসভায় ডাকেন, তা এ'রাই ভাল জানেন। মাঝে মাঝে টেনে আনেন বলে আসতে হয়। কিন্তু এই আন্দোলনের মধ্যে থেকে একটা কথা আমাকে বারবার ধাক্কা দিচ্ছে। তা হচ্ছে, এর নীতিনৈতিকতা, সংস্কৃতির সুর এবং আধার ধসে গিয়েছে। তাই

আজ শুধু শ্লোগান-সর্বস্ব আন্দোলন হচ্ছে। ফলে, বারবার গমকে গমকে ফুলে ফুলে আসছে আন্দোলন—‘পরিবর্তন চাই, বিপ্লব চাই’ বলে। মানুষ মনছে যুবকবা মবছে। কিন্তু বিপ্লব হচ্ছেনা, পরিবর্তন আসছে না। এইবকম বিচ্ছিন্ন, একান্তভাবে বৃটিসংস্কৃতি বহির্ভূত আন্দোলনে—শুধু লড়াই করল, প্রাণ দিলে তাব স্বাধা পরিবর্তন আসে না। সুনির্দিষ্ট বাজনৈতিক লক্ষ্যের, ভিত্তিতে, নীতি-ভিত্তিক আন্দোলন হলে ওবেই জাতিব মবদগু খাড়া হবে।

শবৎসংস্কৃতিব চুচা শবৎচন্দ্রেব চিণ্ডাভাবনা নিয়ে আলাপআলোচনা আজকেব সমাজে এইজনোই আরো বেশী দরকার। আমবা ছিন্নমূল হ য পড়েছি। সংস্কৃতিব যে উচ্চ আধাবটা স্বাধীনতা আন্দোলনের সময় তৈরী হবেছিল, আমরা তাব ধরাবারহিকতা বক্ষা কবত পারছি না। বড বখাগুলা আমবা বিস্বেব থেকে আহরণ কবেছি। কিন্তু দেশেব মাটিতে গড়ে ওঠা উচ্চ সংস্কৃতির সূত্র মস্ত্র আমগা যেন যোগসূত্র হাবিয়ে ফেলেছি। সেই যোগসূত্রটি গড়ে তুলতে হবে। অথচ তাব মস্ত্রে আজ বিরোধও অবশ্যভাব্য। কবণ তিনি ছিন্নন পেটিনুর্জাযা বিপ্লববাদ এবং মানবতাবাদের উপাসক। আব আমাদের কবতে হবে শ্রমিকবিপ্লব, সমাজতান্ত্রিক বিপ্লব—পুঁজিবাদ উচ্ছেদের বিপ্লব। কাজেই বিপ্লবেব সাধনায আমাদের আব এক ধাপ এগিয়ে যেতে হবে। কিন্তু আমবা এগিয়ে যেতে তখনই পাবব যখন আমবা শবৎচন্দ্রকে বুঝছি এবং বুঝে তাব সমস্ত বস্তুকু নিনড়ে নিয়ে তাব ছিবড়েটা ফেনে দিযছি তাব অকার্যকরী দিকটা ফেনে দিযেছি তাব মধ্যে যা কিছু সম্পদ ছিল—সমস্ত সম্পদগুলো নিয়ে আমরা নিঃশেষিত কবে ফেলেছি। আব আমাদের নেওয়ার কিছু নেই। কিন্তু আমবা নিতেই পাবলাম না কিছু। আমবা যোগসূত্রই হাবিয়ে ফেললাম। শবৎচন্দ্রেব শ্রবেব উন্নত মানসিকতা এবং মূল্যবোধগুলোই আমাদের মধ্যে নেই। তাহলে আমরা আজকেব দিনেব বিপ্লবেব সৈনিক হবে কি ব'ব সমাজকে পান্টাব কি কবে? তাই শবৎচন্দ্রকে ভালভাবে জানতে হবে বুঝতে হবে।

# An evaluation of Saratchandra

Shibdas Ghosh

If we want to evaluate scientifically Saratchandra's literature or, for that matter, the literary thoughts and works of any litterateur we should always keep in mind the particular time and the particular historical phase of social development, that is the particular time and social environment, in which that litterateur appeared and created his literature. We shall commit a great mistake if we try to discuss or evaluate the thoughts and the philosophy of life of any litterateur independent of his time and social environment. Because, human thoughts and ideas are conditioned by the limits of time, space and the social environment. Man's power of thinking is, no doubt, infinite and knows no bounds, but this 'boundlessness' or 'infinite power' is in reality limited by the limits of a given material condition or environment, that is conditioned by the given time and space. However great a genius a man may be, his power of thinking and intellect can by no means supersede the limits of objective condition. And this is why it was not possible for Buddha, the greatest thinker of his time, to discover the 'Theory of Relativity'. Similarly, even with his amazing genius, Buddha in his time could not conceive of the democratic concepts of life like that of humanism, women's emancipation, dignity of womanhood, etc., which even a common man enlightened with the concepts of democratic education of the modern civilised world so fondly cherish. It would be wrong to think that those who, at a later stage, propounded these modern democratic concepts of life and made unique discoveries of science could do so because they far excelled Buddha, Sankaracharya, Muhammad, or Jesus in talent. By this I mean that prior to the emergence of all ideas or thoughts the ingredients for the development of human thinking and the intellectual faculty, that is the necessary material condition, are created first in society. While evaluating a litterateur or a great man many often forget this highly vital question. And, as a result, they often arrive at quite queer conclusions. If we do understand that no man, however much great or talented, can supersede the material condition which objectively limits his power of thinking or talent, then and only then shall we be able to make a correct evaluation of the great men in the perspective of the given time and social environment. And only then shall we be able to decide correctly even questions like whether the thoughts, ideas and the activities of the man, whom we are evaluating in the perspective of the given time and social environment, were



really progressive or reactionary from the point of view of the then social movement for social progress, or what was the kind of social thinking, aesthetic taste and cultural standard which he reflected through his thoughts and ideas, and what was the extent to which these helped social progress, or, if reactionary then the extent to which it was reactionary. Otherwise, we shall have to accept that there are some original, fundamental, unchangeable elements in human thoughts and values of life which are not subject to change with the change of time, space, environment, etc.—that is not conditioned or governed by material condition—so independent of time, space, environment, and hence eternal. I consider such a notion as unscientific and faulty. This is not only erroneous but harmful too, because such conceptions stand in the way of development and progress of human thoughts and create impediments in comprehending truth. Anybody refusing to accept it will have to answer: Is it because Buddha was much inferior in talent to Einstein that he failed to discover the 'Theory of Relativity', or the different theories pertaining to Electro-Magnetic Fields? Again, is it because of their superior talent and wisdom to Buddha, Sankaracharya and Socrates that the European humanists could give birth to the democratic concepts and ideals, or is it because Karl Marx was a greater genius that he was able to propound the theory of Scientific Socialism—a still higher concept? I am totally opposed to such views. I consider that the great thinkers of different ages, despite being the greatest geniuses of their time could not overcome the historic limitations of the age, the limit of time, space and social environment. Even when at the peak of highest talent and power it was impossible for any man of an earlier age to have even a glimpse of such modern thoughts that appeared at a later stage of social development. That is why the emergence of Newton was possible only on the basis of the understanding of natural science that Copernicus developed. Similarly, the emergence of a genius like Einstein was possible only after the foundation of the Newtonian Mechanics was laid. Likewise, in literature, too, no particular thought or idea, no particular norm or principle, no particular cultural mould can guide man for all ages to come. A particular category of concepts of a particular epoch may help man advance some steps further embracing a definite or, at least, a few more stages of social environment. But, afterwards, in newer circumstances, in the face of newer problems, the very thoughts and ideas, which once helped to bring social welfare and betterment of life in the field of social progress and advancement, will become inadequate and obsolete. Thus the same old ideas and thoughts become ineffective, inadequate and unreal for throwing light on newer and newer problems. Although these new ideas and concepts grow on the firm foundation of the highest and the most advanced ideas and thoughts of the past, still then, in their historical continuity, there is a break. Then, under newer conditions and out of newer necessities of life and society, a totally new ideological category evolves through contradictions and conflicts with the older one. And, in this way, the ideas and thoughts, the cultural and aesthetical concepts, the concepts of ethics and morality and the sense of values—all these have, time and again, undergone changes transforming themselves into newer and newer ones. So, no truth is absolute or eternal. Truth is always concrete and relative. And, because of this, truth is inexorable and decisive. Truth influences and determines the course of events and phenomena. As because the concept of absolute or eternal truth is unreal, it makes man incapable of adopting an objective outlook on life and activity.

So, while evaluating Saratchandra's literature, we must remember that if Saratchandra, in his time, had not voiced the thoughts and ideas which we consider today to be the highest and loftiest, to conclude, then, that he becomes a reactionary at once is no evaluation at all. These people fail to understand that the main point at issue here is whether or not the philosophy of life, the thoughts and ideas, and the ethical-cultural standard that Saratchandra reflected in his

literature were really conducive to the progressive movement and revolutionary struggle of our country in the then particular stage of social development. The present day revolutionary movement differs from the revolutionary movement of that period not only ideologically, organisationally and in character, but even the people—the forces of revolution—have undergone change. So, if any thought or idea of Saratchandra does not appear to be as progressive as the most advanced thoughts and ideas conducive to the needs of progress and revolution of today, we cannot at once call it erroneous and brand it as reactionary. This is not the way to evaluate any one. Buddha, Socrates, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Rabindranath, Saratchandra—none can then be evaluated correctly. We shall be rejecting, in that event, our entire past as erroneous in relation to what we consider to be correct today. And it would simply mean that we have completely lost our link with the past and have become rootless.

...Now let us examine what the characteristic features of the contemporary period of Saratchandra were. It was the period of the Renaissance movement of India, when the mighty surge of the anti-imperialist freedom struggle was sweeping across the country. In fact, it was Raja Rammohan Roy who pioneered the Renaissance movement in India. The Renaissance movement he initiated in our country advanced along the path of religious reformation, through fusion of the bourgeois humanist concepts and moral values of the European Renaissance with the main theme of religion. Thus, the Renaissance began its journey along the path of movement for religious reformation in our country. The emergence of Vidyasagar at a later period was a landmark in the Renaissance movement, because, in my opinion, it was he who, for the first time, brought about a break with its religious orientation. He, for the first time on our soil, tried utmost to develop the humanist movement, as far as possible in the then condition, on the firm foundation of science, history and logic. ... Our countrymen regard Vidyasagar as a great man and do respect him greatly no doubt, but how many of them could really appraise him? People very often mistook him for an orthodox Brahmin from his outward appearance and traditional Brahmin dress. True, his dress and appearance made him look like a theologian and an orthodox Brahmin, but, in reality, in him we find a true humanist in the then social environment of our country. He wanted to establish a rational integration of the Indian civilisation with the scientific concepts of the West. So he advocated: Teach the students English, teach them Logic of Mill. By teaching Sanskrit it is not possible to make this crippled nation stand erect on its moral backbone. ...For the resurgence of this nation, our countrymen must be made conversant with the treasure-house of knowledge and science of the world. It is through the knowledge of English that our students and youths may be made acquainted with the history, logic and modern scientific ideas as well as with the materialist philosophy of Europe. Opposing Balentine's view he said that as Sankhya and Vedanta were false systems of philosophy so also was Berkeley's of Europe. ...In order to free our people from the influence of such erroneous philosophies they should get acquainted with the knowledge of science and the materialist philosophy of Europe. Then and then only our countrymen, knowing the material world meticulously, will be able to grasp the truth and on the basis of that alone can they give birth to a new philosophy of life and a new sense of values. That is why he was vehemently opposed to teaching such inane idealist philosophies. A close examination of his outlook on education will clearly reveal that Vidyasagar marked a distinct break with the trend of religious reformation which our Renaissance movement had been following since its inception. The thoughts and activities, the approaches and attitudes, habits and practices of his entire life prove beyond doubt that he wanted to free the humanist movement, as far as possible in the then condition, from the religious tutelage.

...Barring this distinct role of Vidyasagar and beyond his period, our Renaissance movement started trekking once more the path of religious reformation. ...The country witnessed a strong

tide of the Brahma religious movement, ostensibly to reform the Hindu society from its superstitions and prejudices, on the one hand, while, on the other, as a reaction to it, the movement for Hindu revivalism swept across the country. The Hindu religious reformers appeared on the scene to free the Hindu society from the curses of casteism and its other vices following the tradition and heritage of the Hindu religion. It was in this period that Ramakrishna made his debut. ...Vivekananda was an astounding creation of this Hindu revivalist movement. He did not keep the Renaissance movement confined within the bounds of mere religious reformation but, in its stead, he put more stress on the 'Karma-Yoga' (cult of work) in place of worship and meditation and was able to instil a deep sense of national pride and patriotism throughout the country. ...The sense of nationalism and patriotism with which he awakened the country was based on the Vedanta philosophy and the spiritual pride of ancient India. ...It was mainly for this reason that the mighty independence movement that grew and developed throughout the length and breadth of the country remained basically a Hindu-religion-oriented nationalist movement. ...It was in such a period, when the urge for freedom and the freedom movement were gradually intensifying within our country, that Saratchandra appeared as a litterateur in Bengal. ...Just as the role of Vidyasagar marked a distinct break in the Renaissance movement, in so far as the question of freeing the humanist movement from the religious tutelage in the then social condition was concerned, so also in the independence movement Saratchandra marked a distinct break with the Hindu-religion-oriented nationalism as well as the decadent humanism making compromise with religion. The literary thoughts and outlook of Saratchandra were basically materialist. Where, in the literary outlook, he could not maintain consistently a materialistic position, he remained an agnostic. But never did he indulge in idealist thinking, nor did he make any compromise with supernaturalism (metaphysics or metaphysical thoughts) in his literary thoughts and ideas. In the very yardstick of progress and reaction in the then social context we shall have to judge which of the two trends—the compromising or the uncompromising, as were reflected in both the political and cultural fields in our anti-feudal, anti-imperialist freedom movement—is helpful and conducive to the growth and development of our present-day movement for social progress. We shall have to determine in continuity with which of these two trends today's new class-consciousness, the anti-capitalist revolutionary consciousness and the proletarian cultural movement can be given birth to. Judged from this angularity, it will be clear that the proletarian culture of our country can grow and develop today only in continuity with the most militant and youthful, secular and uncompromising tone of humanism that found its best expression in the thoughts and values of Saratchandra's literature. Though it is true that the proletarian cultural movement of our country will develop today on the firm foundation of the thoughts and sense of values of Saratchandra, still a contradiction between these two is also inevitable. ...So, most assertively and unreservedly, I would say that in our country Saratchandra is the only literary personality who, in the domain of literature, most boldly and consistently held high the lofty banner of social revolution and most devotedly fought for its accomplishment. Other litterateurs talked of social revolution, no doubt, but did not perform, in the literary field, the very necessary tasks to bring it about. They could not make people unquestionably realise, through their literature, the futility of the old social order by evoking in their minds pain and anguish, sense of deprivation and longing for a better and higher social order. It was Saratchandra who alone accomplished this task quite successfully in our country. That is why Saratchandra was the main target of the most virulent attacks from the defenders of the old society. The orthodox Hindu society was vehemently opposed to Saratchandra's thoughts. Though the 'Brahmas' were no less vociferous against the blindness and superstition, narrowness and prejudices of the Hindu society, the orthodox Hindu society simply ignored them and did not raise such a hue and cry against the writers

belonging to the 'Brahma Samaj', because the orthodox Hindu society realised that these litterateurs could not even touch the fringe of the social problems. The thought and literature which, with a view to bringing about a change in the mental makeup and outlook of the people, were acting against the old customs, prejudices and sense of morality of the old Hindu society, while maintaining all through the closest kinship with it, were none else than Saratchandra's literature and his thought. ..And how strange! A critic of Bengali literature does not feel any qualm to comment that Saratchandra is a *pakshalar sahityik*<sup>1</sup>! And now-a-days our students read these types of criticisms of Saratchandra. Naturally, what else can they be other than 'big pundits'! To go by this type of critics it would seem as if Saratchandra's literature has no base conception and no well-conceived philosophy of life. It is, of course, true that in his stories and novels Saratchandra did never use high sounding phrases unintelligible to the common people. He sought to instil in the minds of the people the very essence of the higher ideas and concepts but always through the most artistic creation of *rasa*—feeling that is sublime, aesthetic and artistic—by creating compassion, pain and anguish in the minds of the readers so that it does not become imperative for one to take the aid of intellect.

Those who can grasp intellectually, for them there are lots of theoretical writings on science and epistemology. Then wherein lies the utility of literature? The necessity of literature lies precisely in making a niche, even within the subtle sensibilities and delicate feelings of men, by making the realisation of truth and higher thoughts acquired through theoretical analyses sublime in the form of stories through the medium of *rasa* beautifully blossomed in a multitude of forms and channels with super-artistic excellence. Necessity of literature lies in imprinting these lofty ideas, even if partially, by evoking pathos and compassion through aesthetic creation even in the minds of those who are unable to grasp through reasoning and intellectual exercise due to lack of educational base and critical power of observation. For instance, humanism once brought in its wake the concept of ethical motherhood. Saratchandra knew that all these lofty concepts were there in different books in the form of theories. But most of the people, even after studying these, often fail to grasp their essence. He sought to inscribe in the minds of the people the loftiest ideas of that age by creating and helping to realise the finest feelings of aesthetics, by awakening pathos and compassion working upon the contradictions and conflicts that take place centring round life, the complexities that develop in human relationship and the waves and turmoils that grew in the feelings and emotions of human mind. Those who can grasp through studies and intellect, for them there is no problem. But those who cannot—the vast section of the masses—they can grasp any lofty idea if catered to them through the medium of *rasa*. And once a man realises truly the ennobling essence of an idea, he gets changed, even without acquiring the theory conceptually. What is the theory of ethical motherhood and what is its concept—even without its slightest knowledge women would be more and more attracted towards the qualities that ethical motherhood really reflect. As, in the course of story, characters begin unfolding themselves, enriched with the values of ethical motherhood, Bindu would surely attract them; so would Yādab, and they would try to understand Mādhav as well. Thus Saratchandra strove to highlight the problems of life by evoking compassion and by awakening a sense of deprivation leading to a deep yearning for something noble and great. He did not want to make his writings loaded with explanations for something noble and great. .. Say, for example, the educated ladies, who have had enough of lectures on ethics and ethical motherhood, are unable to acquire those qualities that have been very easily attained by Hēmānginī of *Mējdidi*, Bindubāsini of *Bindur Chhēlē* or Nārāyaṇī of *Rāmēr Sumati* by the nobility and virtues of their characters. Neither her husband nor her

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A writer whose works lack intellectual elements and are not thought-provoking.

mother could induce Nārāyaṇī to deviate—no petty self-consideration could pursue her away from her path. These female characters of Saratchandra's works fulfilled all their obligations towards those whom they considered to be their own children, though not related by blood. And, in return, they got the real taste of impersonal motherhood. Through these stories Saratchandra tries to show that when a woman gets the real taste of impersonal motherhood in her life what would be the exact form of her motherhood and in what exact nature, grace and elegance her motherhood appears. How does she perceive the difference between her own child and that of another? All these Saratchandra tries to show one after another. Are these merely stories? The portrayal of women's sense of dignity in these stories charms all. No women, after reading *Mējdidi*, would aspire to be Hēmāṅginī's elder sister-in-law. After going through these stories, every woman, no matter whether she can become a Hēmāṅginī or a Nārāyaṇī, will surely feel an intense urge to assimilate the beauties of their characters. What is the significance of this longing? If among the ordinary womenfolk an intense eagerness for attaining the ethical standard of Nārāyaṇī or Mējdidi is generated, if they really start regarding these characters as ideals to be followed, then it would mean that a real upsurge of women's awakening has already made a deep inroad into each and every family. But strangely, these aspects escape the notice of these critics. They criticise Saratchandra's literature as something devoid of any theory. But how is it that the very essence of these theories, when it is carried to the innermost of our family life by Saratchandra with such a superb artistry, appears to the critics as devoid of theory! What a peculiar and hollow intellectualism!

...The literary art and style of a writer and his literary thought are two separate things. In evaluating a litterateur these two aspects should not be mixed up and confused. One aspect is of thinking, while the other is of its being aesthetically and artistically satisfying—showing what high standard of aesthetic values he is capable of creating and what fine artistic beauty (*rasa*) he is capable of producing. Judged from this point of view it may be said that Saratchandra's form of presentation of *rasa* is so superb, so artistic, so delicate and subtle that the readers, in course of relishing it, change to an extent even without knowing it. In this Saratchandra was the best among the then litterateurs. So, I would say without any hesitation that he was the best in literary artistry among his contemporaries.

...It is not for a litterateur to indulge in scholastic discourse on abstract theories—he is a creator of *rasa*. Herein lies the real worth of a litterateur. In my opinion those who are always after high theories in stories and novels and judge their merit on this yardstick alone are totally unfit to be literary critics. The worth of literature is not in the discourse on abstract theories. Its utility in society lies elsewhere. There has never been any dearth of scholars in the world dwelling on abstract theories. For that there are others in society, who are greater than the litterateurs. There are the philosophers, the economists, the political thinkers and the scholars in different branches of science and epistemology but, what these scholars cannot do is done by a litterateur. And it is because of this that the litterateurs are admired and esteemed, respected and adored even by them. They are effective where we are incapable. The ideas and thoughts which the philosophers and the thinkers want to impress upon are portrayed by the litterateurs so aesthetically, in such an artistic and lucid manner, in such diverse forms through *rasa*, that even if a man fails to grasp these due to lack of intellectual aptitude, still, while relishing the *rasa*, going repeatedly through the artistic expressions and mastering the dialogues, he becomes used to these and undergoes some changes in outlook. Thus, in bringing about a revolutionary change in the mental makeup and a cultural revolution in the society, literature is a very effective and powerful weapon. Litterateurs are, precisely, to

perform the task of preparing the necessary cultural background for any political movement, be it a freedom movement, a socialist revolution or any struggle for bringing about a radical transformation of society. Herein lies their progressive role. Judged in this context, Saratchandra was the pioneer playing the most progressive role in the field of literary creations conducive to the on-going Renaissance movement, national freedom struggle and the movement for social revolution. Through his writings, Saratchandra did reflect the most advanced and intricate thoughts of his time. But he did so through the narration of stories, through the medium of *rasa*. He never resorted to theoretical discourse to convey his ideas. And as a litterateur herein lies his greatest success.

Perhaps I, too, am capable of some theoretical discourse, that also on such problems of different branches of science and epistemology that make a man spell-bound. But I, too, am indebted to litterateurs; I do approach them with begging bowl. Even then, I need not hunt after Rabindranath and Goethe for high thoughts. I know, many may take exception to it, but still it is true that for theories and thoughts we need not go to Rabindranath or Goethe. We have to go to them, but that is for something else. Even a man like Lenin had to approach and seek help of the litterateurs. So do I. And same is the case with thinkers of all ages, of all countries. They do so because they too have a feeling of want. And this want they satisfy through literary art. Besides, the litterateurs implant artistically these thoughts and ideas, principles and precepts into the social consciousness which we like to carry deep into the society, but cannot. Precisely it is in this that a litterateur is superior to us. This is why we respect them, adore them. So, throughout the ages it has been found that the leading literary figures have held the great thinkers in high esteem. So also, the great thinkers understand the real worth of the great litterateurs and respect them. It is the mediocres who have false vanity and ego, and who refuse to acknowledge the greatness of the leading thinkers. But in no country did the really great litterateurs ever show disrespect to the great thinkers of their time. Because, they appreciate the real worth of each other, and know their respective spheres of importance and efficacy. So, whoever have sought to find in Saratchandra's literature abstract theories, have utterly failed to understand him. And, failing to grasp his literary creations, many of the critics have branded Saratchandra as a *pakshalar sahityik*. Pity for them! And again, those who have praised him too, have called Saratchandra, not being able to grasp the real essence and greatness of his literature, just 'a writer of sweet tales', 'a compassionate writer', 'the great story-teller'.

...A close and careful study of the history of the European Renaissance would clearly show that in its early stage it was full of youthful vigour, basically secular and revolutionary in approach. This Renaissance reflected, in the main, an uncompromising tone against religion and spiritualism. The pioneers of this Renaissance movement held that search for truth must be based on history, scientific reasoning, as well as on experiment, proof and verification. Even if some mistakes are committed in this process of study, there is little harm. If there is anything unknowable—neither you nor I can know it. So, it is futile to run after it. In our country, Saratchandra's literary thoughts reflected this uncompromising tone of the early stage of the European Renaissance. So, Saratchandra jokingly said: "I shall leave alone what is really impervious to intellect—only because it is so. To declare something inexplicable, inconceivable, unknowable but to try continuously, at the same time, to know and explain that very unknowable—this I would never practise. Nor shall I tolerate one who will indulge in such practice. ...Once they are declaring something as unknowable, then again, in the same breath, are giving vivid elaboration on the very same—as if they witnessed it then and there. To comprehend what

cannot by any means be comprehended, page after page are being filled up, book after book are being written. But why? 'Formless', 'Propertyless', 'Unconcerned', 'Indifferent'<sup>1</sup>—all these are meaningless verbiages." If they study and analyse history critically, the futility of all such concepts will stand ridiculed more and more.

Saratchandra was often asked: 'You are a litterateur, how is it that your library is packed with books on Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, History, Psychology and Economics, but not a single book is there of any renowned novelist of the world?' Once, in a meeting at Chandannagar, Mati Babu and others also asked several such questions. While answering them Saratchandra said 'I myself write fictions, it is not that I do never go through any fiction. Naturally, if you thoroughly look for, you may come across a few. But however, I do not enjoy much these fictions.' Although Saratchandra said this humorously, but what actually he meant to say was that if an author wanted to realise the social problems and had to say something about these through stories, or, in other words, if he wanted to reveal truth through the portrayal of characters and events—he could do it only when he had truly realised the problems of men and society. And it is absolutely impossible to know this truth unless one acquires a deep knowledge of science. So, to comprehend the complex processes of mental makeup and its peculiarities, one should study science carefully and analyse history meticulously. So we see, because of such an objective and scientific outlook and approach of Saratchandra, there arose a great difference between him and Rabindranath on the question as to how to fight out superstition. It is quite likely that any rational man would regard superstition and casteism as social vices. During the days of struggle for independence, no great man of our country ever supported these practices, but where exactly Saratchandra differed with Rabindranath and others on this question, was the very method of fighting these vices. Saratchandra knew that the ritualistic practices of untouchability and casteism, prevalent among the people, are nothing but superstition. When, through long practice, something develops into a social habit—right or wrong, when people get accustomed to abide by this—it becomes a superstition. Saratchandra tried to explain this problem in many of his articles and short stories. Citing instances, he shows how even a beloved mother becomes very much apprehensive and bursts out into tears at the very idea of her son going to a foreign land lest he should become an outcaste. On his return she does not fail to nurse him, while he is in sickbed, with supreme affection and endurance, caring little for her food; even then, due to her superstition—ingrained so deep—she cannot think of taking food, without a dip in holy water. Tears will roll down her cheeks, still she would not take the food touched by her outcast son. When superstition is so deep-rooted, can it be eradicated by such naive logic as Gurudeb<sup>2</sup> has advanced: 'Is man inferior even to a cat? How is it then the sanctity of your caste remains unaffected even when your pussy eats from your dish, but is lost, at once a person of lower caste or of different religion touches you!' Being pained, he replied with a tinge of banter to Rabindranath wondering how plants and animals could at all enter into discussions on human problems. And how do such examples help? What do they prove at all? "The right and wrong of human conduct can never be judged by raising such sophistries as why a cat is favoured to sit on one's lap, or an ant is allowed to creep into one's dish. ...However sweet it may sound, or however dazzling it may appear, the logic is in the ultimate found to be worthless." On Rabindranath's remark—"When the pet cat of a Brahmin lady sits on her lap with 'unclean-mouth'<sup>3</sup>, her purity is not blemished, she does not object"—Saratchandra said in jest: "Probably she

<sup>1</sup> Non-entity, omnipotent, omniscient

<sup>2</sup> Rabindranath Tagore

<sup>3</sup> A cat with cooked food in mouth is, according to Hindu superstition, untouchable.

does not ; but how does it help ? Citing the example of cats one cannot argue, 'You do not object when a cat, an inferior animal, sits on your lap. I am a much superior being, naturally, therefore, you cannot refuse my sitting on your lap'. " Is it a logic at all ? Those who properly understand the problem of casteism know that it is not that simple that one refuses to take food from an outcaste or a lower caste person out of disrespect only. Where there is not even the slightest disrespect, where there is the deepest of love and affection, superstition stands even there in the way of accepting food. He tried to highlight this problem by depicting the character of Rām Bāhu in his novel *Gṛhadāha*. He showed how prejudice instantaneously turned such a kind and affectionate man into a rigid and rude one. When his love and affection for Achalā had almost taken him out of the narrow bounds of religion, how his prejudice, all at once, turned him, a man with great emotion and compassion, into almost a brute. So, by portraying the characters in this way, by evoking pain and anguish in the minds of the readers, Saratchandra tried to make them realise that these norms, rituals and superstitions, adherence to casteism and untouchability, which make man inhuman, make him forget his duties and responsibilities, dry up his feelings and emotions, should better be rejected. He wanted to fight out these superstitions by evoking pathos and compassion in man. Because he knew it very well that without developing a social movement against all sorts of prejudices and superstitions, without striking at the very root of these social evils, society cannot be freed from their pernicious effects. Once he remarked with pain that a man like Vidyasagar tried to introduce widow-marriage in revolt against the society without paying heed to the then social mind ; he tried to do it with the help of legislation, and even initiated the marriage of a few widows. Yet he failed to introduce widow-marriage, because it did not take the form of a social movement. Had it been so, it could have been otherwise.

Though widow-marriage got legal sanction, still prejudice about widow-marriage remained entrenched in the social mind. If the contemporary authors, by arousing pathos and compassion, could change the attitude and mental makeup of the people and could convince them of its necessity, then a social opinion might have developed in favour of its introduction. It can be achieved not by simply harping on its necessity in articles or speeches, but by bringing the issue into bold relief through most sympathetic and beautiful painting of the pathos of widows to arouse compassion in the minds of the readers—as, for example, Saratchandra has artistically done in the episode of Ramā and Ramēś.

A group of critics allege that Saratchandra was not in favour of widow-marriage since he did not get any of his widow-characters married ; Sābitrī, a widow, was not given in marriage too. Ramā was also a widow—she too not ; obviously, his superstition stood in the way ! I feel that such critics are quite unfit for any discussion on literature. Saratchandra knew it well that if he had to get Ramēś and Ramā married in the then social condition, he would have had no other option than to take them out of the society and put them up—say in a hotel, or portray them like the heroes and heroines of trash films, because the marriage of Ramā and Ramēś in the rural setup of those days would not have been held in respect. Unless socially sanctioned and honoured, love cannot maintain its beauty and charm simply on its own. This is why he painted Ramā as a widow—but a widow with unparalleled beauty and charm of character. Then after depicting a really beautiful and aesthetic relation between Ramā and Ramēś, he wanted, as if, to ask : 'Now, tell me, does this relation, the beauty and grace that have bloomed out of it, look unseemly even though Ramā is a widow ? ...Is it the kind of love which you very often enter into, or is it something greater than that ? Does the episode of Ramā and Ramēś evoke compassion in you ? Do you want that the relation that grew centring round these two lives consummate in union ? If you really want them to lead together a life of honour and dignity, then this age-old Hindu society has to be changed radically.'



...In *Charitrahin*, Saratchandra portrayed Sābitrī who, in the light of the then social prejudices, mental makeup and religion-oriented morality, would appear to be no better than a fallen woman and a mere degraded maid-servant. But how could Satīś, a man coveted even by an educated and cultured woman like Sarōjini, love Sābitrī? Usually, the relationship with such a woman, if it develops at all, cannot be better than an imbecile and a perverted one. But Saratchandra, with supreme care and sympathy, painted a truly attractive and ethical relationship between such an ordinary woman and Satīś, and, developing it gradually through witty and charming dialogues and protecting them from all propensities to base tendencies, created a high aesthetic beauty. And then presenting it before all—bigoted and orthodox readers, ordinary housewives, educated as well as uneducated people—he intended to say, 'Does it look unethical? How do you like it, how do you appreciate this relationship? Does this episode pain you? Do you feel for Sābitrī? Do you feel pain, do you feel aggrieved that they cannot unite?' All, in one voice, would surely say 'Yes, we do. We wish they could unite.' Through this episode Saratchandra wanted to point out 'Wish as you may, they can never unite, so long the present Hindu society and the Hindu religion exist.' Through these writings Saratchandra wanted to rouse a strong urge for social revolution by generating pain, anguish and a feeling of want in the minds of readers—leading to a yearning for higher values of life. He did not deceive himself, nor did he confuse others with hollow and tall talks of social revolution.

Kiraṇmayī in *Charitrahin* is another magnificent creation of Saratchandra. Portraying the character of Kiraṇmayī with rare skill and supreme artistry, he wanted, as if, to ask the educated and cultured readers: 'How would you like it if woman be such? Compare with your unsophisticated, old-styled, superstitious wives, daughters, sisters or fiancée—and then say, how do you like Kiraṇmayī? But in your superstitious Hindu society what is the fate of a woman like Kiraṇmayī, so magnificent in wisdom, knowledge, intelligence, erudition, generosity and beauty, other than becoming an insane? How can such a dignified lady with so high an ethical and aesthetic taste and womanhood be satisfied, like ordinary women, with a commonplace life or the degraded life of a fallen woman?'

Although Kiraṇmayī slept on the same bed with Dibākar in the ship, she did not surrender herself. Referring to this incident many critics say that Saratchandra reflected through this the age-old Hindu religious prejudices. But in his discussion with Matī Babu and others, Saratchandra himself explained why a woman like Kiraṇmayī cannot give herself to Dibākar. In that discussion at Chandannagar, Matī Babu and others remarked with a banter: 'Sarat Babu, however unconventional you may appear from your writings, in reality you hold the Hindu religious concept of chastity in high esteem; and that is why you did not let Kiraṇmayī's chastity be defiled.' Saratchandra burst out into laughter and said: 'You have hardly understood this character; while painting this character, it was not at all a matter of consideration to me whether your Hindu concept of chastity would be upheld or not.' The character of Kiraṇmayī has been portrayed with great care. In the same novel Sarōjini has been presented as an educated and enlightened lady in sophisticated surroundings. There is also Surabālā with whom a husband like Upēndra is simply absorbed in the charm of love; and also we find Sābitrī, so full of wit and humour, beauty and grace. Had these characters not been there, the portrayal of Kiraṇmayī would not have been so difficult. To portray Kiraṇmayī beside these characters, Saratchandra had to take great care and extreme caution. Had she offered herself to a boy like Dibākar, this most dignified character, developed with so much of care, would have been completely spoiled.

Kiraṇmayī is such a woman compared to whose knowledge, wisdom and ethical standard Dibākar is but a mere boy. Can a woman of such extraordinary personality, character and

culture offer herself to such a boy? True, from her intense desire to wreck vengeance on Upēndra, Kiraṇmayī drew Dibākar out of home. And she knew that Upēndra had great affection for Dibākar; she tried to retaliate upon Upēndra in this way. Ultimately, she realised that it hurt herself more than it hurt Upēndra. A blunder she committed no doubt, but, after all, she was a woman with a delicate sense of aesthetics and a high sense of dignity. Consequently, she had to contend with her own self till her last days. She became tormented from within while protecting the honour and dignity of her womanhood from Dibākar in whom she roused lust and longing by pretending love to him, just to retaliate on Upēndra. But she could never allow her womanhood to be denigrated. So Saratchandra bantered that it was his least concern whether the chastity of the woman remained unblemished or not. His only concern was to see that the character of Kiraṇmayī, built up with so much care and caution, endowed with so high a standard of womanhood, did not get spoiled.

...Saratchandra, through aesthetic presentation of characters like Ramā, Kiraṇmayī and Sābitrī—evoking pathos and compassion among the readers—has intended to bring about a change in the superstitious, conservative and narrow outlook of the then society. He wanted to evoke the question: 'How would you like it if women be like Kiraṇmayī? How do you like such qualified and cultured ladies? If you like, how could you nurture them in this society? Do you prefer women with whom you live, or aspire for those who talk in Sābitrī's language? In that case, even if such characters appear in this society, how could you protect them?'

So, either you remain content with those unsophisticated, superstitious women, follow the customs and rituals of the Hindu society, or else change it radically. It is for their own sake that the menfolk need most the education of women and their emancipation, development of their characters and self-respect. But foolish and mean as they are, they do not understand their own good even. That is why the menfolk, victims of superstition, oppose the movement for women's emancipation. And again, the educated men who, given any opportunity, enliven gatherings with fiery speeches on women's emancipation, have been found very much keen to confine their wives within the four walls—a strange contradiction indeed! So, Saratchandra says that for the sake of their own development and progress, their own freedom and refinement of taste and upliftment of culture—let alone women's own need—menfolk themselves need the emancipation of women, their education, development of womanhood and culture. This is the way Saratchandra speaks and this is the way he puts these questions.

...At the fate of Ramā, Kiraṇmayī, Sābitrī and Rājlakṣmī, many critics comment that sex has been denied in Saratchandra's literature. They allege that Saratchandra was a puritan and pleaded for platonic love. See the fun! These ultra-modern critics brand him as a puritan, whereas in those days, the puritan and orthodox Hindu society accused him of moral laxity. Both these groups are sagacious indeed!

During the freedom struggle when petty bourgeois revolutionism had great impact in Bengal, Saratchandra was in our heart of hearts. During those days we read Saratchandra's literature passionately. Even now, whenever I get an opportunity, I read his works, and the dialogues are still fresh in my memory. In part four of *Śrikānta*, Rājlakṣmī once told Śrikānta: "Would I be having you naught for nothing—no obligation to fulfil—am I not to reciprocate? That I came in your life truly—shall I not leave behind an imprint? When I depart from this world shall I go barren like this? No, never." Hearing this, Śrikānta was all respect, love and affection for her. What is implied in this expression? Are these subtle hints meant for the simpletons or the intellectuals? And what sort of intellectuals are they who fail to grasp this subtle hint and fail to appreciate the most artistic form of its expression? Only people with delicate sense of aesthetics can appreciate

this. Has sex been denied here? Has physical aspect of love been denied? Elsewhere in the same novel *Rājīlakṣmī* told Śrīkānta: "While talking, you fell asleep last night. I removed your hand from around my neck and sat by your side. ...At dawn I left. Fortunately, the sleep of a *Kumbhakarna*<sup>1</sup> cannot be disturbed so easily, or otherwise I would have almost awakened you out of temptation." And she said no more. Saratchandra himself has stated that literary skill does not lie only in the ability to write. The capacity to control the pen and stop in time is also a very important virtue of a writer. One should know exactly when and where to stop, in order to create higher form of art and aesthetic beauty. People with low taste are not satisfied unless they get a graphic description of what *Rājīlakṣmī* did. But a man with true aesthetic taste would simply shudder at the idea of such a description. Saratchandra, all along, dealt with finer arts and aesthetics, his pen never catered to low taste.

.. *Baikunthēr Will* is a story by Saratchandra with an ordinary plot. In the opinion of the intellectuals, it is a mere story having nothing thought-provoking in it. But as for myself, I face a problem every time I go through it. When I get absorbed in this story, emotions mount high in me—it is so difficult to check. Because, something that is lost to us, which we aspire to regain but cannot, is embedded in this story. In this story we find a truly charming picture of brotherhood of the by-gone days. True, our old society had innumerable bad aspects, but there were certain merits too. Sweet and charming relations between brothers and sisters could be found in the joint families of those days of feudal economy. Now, the feudal economy is no more, joint families have disintegrated, and families centring round husband and wife have emerged. All these have taken place in the course of social progress no doubt. But we can enjoy even today with great relish, if some one can artistically paint the delicate charm and beauty that flowed from the interaction of emotions and passions of relations in those joint families. Coming to know Gōkul, we all wish if we had a brother like him—may be he is illiterate and ignorant, we do not mind.

Another important aspect that Saratchandra wanted to highlight through the characterisation of Gōkul is that the true essence and tune of culture cannot be realised just from bookish knowledge and academic degrees. Gōkul's younger brother Binōd has obtained a first class in B. A. and is a gold medallist—and Gōkul himself is proud of it—but despite all this, has Binōd been able to grasp the essence of culture? He has merely learnt how to maintain an outward decency and etiquette in his behaviour. How much aware is he about the essence of culture? But Gōkul, though he talks wild due to lack of education, has grasped the real essence of culture and has attained self-dignity. That is why he knows how to honour his mother and brother, he knows how to respect others. But in spite of his academic qualifications, Binōd does not know this.

By portraying Gōkul, Saratchandra tried to reveal this very truth and wanted to unfold, as well, what real brotherhood means. True, the social framework in which such charm and beauty of brotherhood flourished—as portrayed in the story—would never come back. In today's changed society, in place of joint families, families centring round husband and wife have appeared. But why should that tender and charming relation not be there? Rather, when one is not dependent economically on the other, it is expected that the feelings of love and affection would take a still higher form.

Why should then petty selfishness and low taste, even worse than was prevalent earlier, be there? Saratchandra painted Gōkul as a man who does not humiliate others even though he may be subjected to a thousand and one insults even by those who were dependent on him. He really loves men and although uneducated he knows how to love others. This shows that he has acquired the very essence of ethics and culture. He knows how to protect the honour and dignity of his mother. His father-in-law, despite persistent efforts, could not coax him into doing anything

<sup>1</sup> A character in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, who used to keep awake only for a day after sleeping for six months at a stretch.

against the will of his mother. Nor could his wife even. But what are not the 'educated', 'sophisticated' and the so-called 'champions' of 'Rabindra-culture' doing today just to satisfy their wives ! But look, here is an uneducated man who, it seems, can easily be talked into doing anything and everything but possesses what a fine sense of dignity ! Nothing can make him budge an inch.

...Gökul's father-in-law, with the help of his daughter, persuaded Gökul and managed to get hold of the keys and finalised arrangements to turn Chakrabarti, an old employee, out of the shop. He quite succeeded in his manoeuvre to make Gökul believe that his step-mother was plotting against him, and so, to save himself from ruin, Chakrabarti had to be turned out. Gökul, being taken in by this trickery due to his ignorance and simplicity, concluded : 'Yes, quite true she is but my step-mother, how could she wish my well-being ?' On the counsel of his father-in-law and wife, he took away the keys of the shop from Chakrabarti. Gökul's father-in-law was sure that everything was all right and Gökul was now completely in his grip. Gökul's wife also became very jubilant. She too thought that she had at long last been able to establish her control over her husband, freeing him from his mother's clutches. So, she felt elated on her victory. But Gökul, whom his wife, his father-in-law and even his mother could not understand, was understood perfectly by Chakrabarti, though he was an ordinary employee of the shop. Without any protest he left the place silently, went to Gökul's mother and told her everything. Mother came and called : "Gökul". Gökul, forgetting everything at once, responded all alert : "Yes, mother." Mother just said : "Chakrabarti is an old hand. I desire that, so long he lives, he will be with us. Let him go to the shop with the keys of the safe and the account books." Gökul at once dropped the keys on the floor. Chakrabarti picked it up with a smile and left. Then started an incessant shower of insults and rebukes on Gökul. Gökul bore all these silently. Shameful and distressed, almost in tears, Gökul could only say in a choked voice : "How could I know that mother would become inimical and give such an order ?" See, how wonderful ! It appeared that everything was almost settled and Gökul was made to believe that his mother was doing mischief and conspiring against him, but the moment mother ordered him to give back the keys to Chakrabarti, the whole design got upset. No more could they interfere with the affairs of the shop. Neither the dictate of his wife nor that of his father-in-law worked any more. This is Gökul !

Through this simple story what Saratchandra wanted to tell is that education is very important no doubt, but high University degrees alone do not always enable one to grasp the essence and tune of culture. This is why what Binöd, a gold medallist, could not acquire, Gökul, even being uneducated, could well grasp. Only that he does not know how to express it. As he cannot say the right thing at the right moment, and that too properly, he is often misunderstood, many a complication crop up and he cannot achieve what he wants to—his attempts end in futility. Precisely here lies the utility of education. What Saratchandra wanted to convey here is that lack of education is fraught with many a danger ; nothing good comes out of it. But can we grasp the very essence of culture, its main theme, merely by acquiring academic qualifications or having degrees ? Look, and say, who has acquired the higher human qualities and high culture better—the educated Binöd, or the illiterate Gökul ? Being educated be a Gökul and not a Binöd, then and only then education will be really meaningful. Even without being educated, if you can be at least like Gökul then you will be able to do more good to society than Binöd. Gökul knows how to honour his mother and uphold her dignity. He is not a slave to sex. At the dictate of his wife he can never disown his obligations to his mother and younger brother and put them in distress. Yet, in my long experience, I have come across many so-called communists and progressives of the day who do not hesitate in the least to throw their mothers in utter helplessness and to lead a fashionable life separately with their wives. Saratchandra has conveyed these ideas through the medium of

*rasa* and never tried to theorise and never explained—'here I discussed this or that.' Precisely here, on this point, he has surpassed all in his success as a litterateur.

In the context of the countrywide moral and cultural degradation which is affecting even the leftist movements today, if Saratchandra is critically studied and correctly evaluated, then a new concept of morality and culture would emerge. It would bring in its wake a sea of change. Naturally, it would also cause a great change even in the prevalent ideas and concepts of culture.

Everybody would admit that the proletarian ideology which is much higher than the bourgeois revolutionary thoughts and values emerged in history in continuity with the noble thoughts and characters that developed stage by stage in the course of advancement of human society. Then, is it not to be expected that the persons, the characters which would emerge out of the proletarian revolutionary movement would attain a much higher standard than the old humanist or bourgeois revolutionaries—the finest product of the bourgeois democratic revolution? But what do we actually find in our society? During the time of Saratchandra, the Indian freedom movement was emasculated and full of weaknesses. It was not free from religious orientation, nor was its mainstream uncompromising in approach even against imperialism. The leaders in their sheer eagerness to achieve somehow political freedom had thrown away the banner of social and cultural revolution; even the most advanced section, the vanguard of the political movement, compromised with religion and its heritage, compromised in the sphere of social customs, personal behaviour and family relations.

It should be borne in mind that despite all these, the then revolutionaries and youths of Bengal had such firm and determined character because of the tremendous impact of Saratchandra's literature on the freedom movement. But the so-called communists of today, although they can deliver speeches, discuss intricate problems and explain different questions, have not been able to maintain even that very standard. It is expected of the communists of today that they would attain much higher a standard than that of C. R. Das and Khudiram. Not to speak of attaining that level, these communists have degraded themselves much. Do you know why? The reason lies in the failure to evaluate Saratchandra's literature correctly, in the refusal by the so-called progressives to accord due recognition to his role as a litterateur and in the utter failure to understand Saratchandra, the man. As a result, while breaking from the past, we have lost the very tune of continuity and thus have become rootless. Those who could not understand Gökul, who have failed to notice that behind all his apparently unseemly utterances and meaningless behaviour there is inherent in him a high standard of cultural and ethical base, who could not learn anything from him and could not attain even the cultural standard he reflected—can they ever be communists? Those who cannot be at least a Giriś or a Yādab can never become communists. In our society, only those who would be able to appreciate both the values and limitations of Yādab, Giriś and Gökul and be able not only to assimilate all the beauties of their characters but would also go ahead of them may become communists one day. But can those, who are devoid of the cultural tune inherent in Gökul's character and who belong to the category of Binōd and Hariś, become communists simply by Marxist phrase-mongering? Men like Binōd and Hariś can never become communists. Men like Yādab, Gökul and Giriś, in the course of attaining higher standard, may become communists. Likewise, given the opportunity, women like Bindu, Nārāyaṇī, Hēmāṅgini and Chhōta Bau, Baṛa Bau of *Niṣkṛti* may, in the process of development, become real communists.

Those litterateurs, who cram their writings with hollow high-sounding words and the critics who assess literature to be much more progressive in the light of such verbiage, actually belong to the category of Binōd of *Baikunthēr Will* and Hariś and Mēja Bau of *Niṣkṛti*. These writers and literary critics have totally failed to understand the characters of Saratchandra's literature.

As I was saying, it is only women like Nārāyaṇī who can become communists and not the type of Nārāyaṇī's mother or Mēja Bau, even if educated. With education they can at best be a Bēlā, but not Kamal of *Śēṣ Praśna*. Women like Kamal, in the process of gaining knowledge and experience, develop one day into a communist. To women like Bēlā, liberty means a right

to anyhow have maximum share of husband's property through litigation—if there is no rapport with him. They say: 'You have married me, since we are divorced now, why will you not pay alimony?' These women, the so-called champions of liberty, do not even understand the simple logic that if a man has married a woman, she too has married him.

So, if the question of maintenance arises, why should the responsibility be his alone—should it not be mutual? Can any woman with truly independent spirit, education and sense of dignity ever think of proposing: 'Since you have married me, why shall you not give provision?' The ordinary uneducated women with age-old superstition may be accustomed to such a way of thinking. For them, it is quite natural. But how is it that even those who are educated, who talk of democracy, freedom and equality of sex, indulge in such thoughts? How is it that the present generation lack so seriously in their concept as to what is love, affection, dignity of womanhood and values of life? Is it because there was a dearth of writers in our country who talked big? No. Our trend of thinking and bent of mind would take a new turn if we understand Saratchandra properly; everybody would then realise that getting something at the cost of self-respect is beneath human dignity. Women, too, would be able to realise this. Food and shelter, wealth and happiness, sex and love, affection and compassion are all, no doubt, very important in human life, but what else is left if anybody gets all these at the cost of dignity and self-respect? All these senses of values are lost in our social life today. The cult of Saratchandra's literature will help revive them.

...I know many so-called communists and progressive critics who hold that in his novel *Bipradās* Saratchandra has patronised Hindu revivalism. I do not fully agree with them. To me, it seems that they have taken only a superficial view of this novel. They did not go through it thoroughly, or even if they did, they had failed to grasp the main theme of Saratchandra's thought reflected in this novel. It is true that the impact of Hindu revivalism which was there in our freedom movement had been reflected through his novel *Bipradās* only. Before we discuss this, we should keep in mind that the various social thinkings—their conflicts and contradictions—act within a litterateur as well.

In order to correctly evaluate the literary thinking of a writer we must first of all find out what trend of thinking is dominant in him. Is it not true that both virtues and vices exist in man? When we call a man good, does it mean that he does not have even a little of vice? Then how do we characterise a man having both vices and virtues? We do it by the dominant aspect of his character. Him we call bad, whose dominant aspect is bad. And one in whom the dominant aspect is good—we call him good. Therefore, the character of everything, of every phenomenon, is to be determined by its dominant aspect. Judged from this angle, even if we fully accept the opinion of the aforesaid critics regarding *Bipradās*, still then it cannot be denied that the dominant trend of Saratchandra's literary thinking is uncompromising, secular and revolutionary humanism—full of youthful vigour. My considered opinion regarding *Bipradās* is that Saratchandra tried to portray characters like Bipradās and Dayāmayī with great care and caution as because he could not keep himself completely aloof from the tremendous impact of the Hindu revivalism in our nationalist movement. Although, because of his powerful pen and magnificent skill, Saratchandra was somewhat successful in portraying these two characters at the beginning—all their charm and beauty were lost ultimately. A man with a critical eye cannot but observe that such a powerful pen as of Saratchandra practically lost its flow and charm while painting Bipradās. His usual artistic and elegant style of expression lacked in depicting the characters of Bipradās and Dayāmayī. He tried his best to paint Bipradās beautifully just by arranging some chosen dialogues and creating a solemn atmosphere. But whenever he presented Dwijadās, Bandanā or even Mr. Ray, who had a very insignificant role in the novel, his pen became lively and eloquent and regained its usual flow and the style was artistic. It is clear from this that in spite of all efforts, his attempt to portray Bipradās and Dayāmayī met with failure. Look at the fate of Bipradās and his mother, the two revivalist characters—even the powerful pen of Saratchandra could not ultimately save them. The characters which ultimately came to the fore as

noble were neither Bipradās nor his mother—but Dwijadās, Bandanā and her selfless, absent-minded father. If we understand the novel this way, then it will be found that his secular humanist outlook and sense of values gained ascendancy, may be unknowingly, even in this novel.

...In his literary thinking, Saratchandra was essentially a secular humanist, not a Marxist. The thoughts and ideas which we, the communists, so fondly cherish today were not reflected in Saratchandra's literature. So it is pointless to discuss, while evaluating Saratchandra's literature, whether he reflected proletarian culture and voiced the idea of working class revolution or not. Those who, off and on, raise this sort of question while evaluating Saratchandra's literature—do actually muddle the whole thing by indulging in what is utterly irrelevant. Here the point is : who had represented the most progressive trend of humanist thinking during the national independence struggle of our country ? That is, in the then Indian condition, who actually reflected the most progressive thoughts and ideas of the bourgeois humanism ? Were they not the petty bourgeois revolutionaries ? Petty bourgeois revolutionism, in those days, was the most progressive trend of thinking in bourgeois humanism and Saratchandra in the main reflected that very trend in his literature. So, in our country it was Saratchandra's literature in which was reflected the highest standard of the most progressive thoughts and culture of the bourgeois humanism. Still then how close he came to the working class thoughts and ideas ! During the last phase of his life, working class movement had already grown in our country. So, had there been a great Marxist leader like Lenin at that time to provide correct guideline to our literature, then it would not have been altogether impossible that proletarian literature might have grown in our country through Saratchandra as was the case with Gorky in Russia. And in that case, it would have been of much higher standard because, in artistic skill, Saratchandra was undoubtedly much superior to Gorky.

In this context, I would like to cite a few illustrations from Saratchandra's literature. Whatever may be the literary value of *Śrikānta* from the point of view of reflecting the humanist values and high cultural-ethical standard of those days, what is its worth in terms of proletarian culture ? Still then we find that in the third part of *Śrikānta*, where the construction of a railway track is described, the spontaneous indignation with which Śrikānta bursts out, observing the wretched condition of the workers with whom he had to spend a night in slums, reflects not the humanist thinking, but something more—a higher thought and culture. For example, seeing the sub-human and distressed condition of the workers Śrikānta says : "You, the carriers of modern civilisation, you die ! Forgive not, not in the least, this cruel civilisation that has made your life such. If you are to carry it, carry it down speedily to the abysmal depth of its grave."

In *Pathēr Dāhī*, too, the outlook Saratchandra expressed about labour movement, though not fully consistent with the Marxist understanding, does undoubtedly reflect a strong voice of protest against economism and reformism in labour movement. ...Here he has clearly shown that those who organise workers' movements just for wage-increase and reforms, do greatest harm to the workers' cause under the garb of sympathy and thereby they virtually oppose the revolution itself.

In *Pathēr Dāhī*, Saratchandra ventilated, from various angles, some aspects of his philosophical view-points. From those it appears as if he was going to supersede the limit of humanist thinking. Today the humanist values have assumed a stagnant character. Bourgeois humanism has given birth to some 'unchangeable', 'absolute' concepts about right and wrong, about ethics and aesthetics. The concepts and ideas which grew and developed out of the necessity of the bourgeois revolution to meet the needs of the revolutionary transformation of capitalist production subsequently became obsolete with the attempt of the humanists to arrest these by attributing absolute and permanent values to them. Although the Marxist concepts of ethics, morality and aesthetics have historical continuity, no doubt, with the humanist concepts of ethics, morality and aesthetics—but still then there is a break as these are two distinctly different ideological categories. According to the dialectical materialist or Marxist concept, 'necessity' does not mean pragmatic necessity, the petty interest of an individual ; it grows out of objective

reality, in the light of which the correctness or otherwise of any social idea, concept or ideology is determined. In *Pathēr Dābī* we find a trend of thinking and pattern of reasoning almost similar to this concept. It is true that the dominant thinking of Saratchandra was bourgeois revolutionism and militant humanism expressed through 'anarchism' in the then social condition of our country, but, still then, in this novel he tends to supersede, here and there, the bourgeois humanist thinking even, and like startling sparks some aspects of communist thinking and ideas flashed in him. See, what Sabvasāchi says in *Pathēr Dābī* "There is nothing like absolute or eternal truth in this ever changing world. It comes into being and goes out of being. With passage of time, from one age to another, it undergoes changes and assumes newer and newer forms in conformity with the changing needs of human society. The truth of the past must be adhered to in the present—such a belief is erroneous, the notion supersutitious." This very concept of truth and method of reasoning of Saratchandra reveal a great deal of influence of dialectical materialism, communist thoughts and ideas and reasoning in him.

Sabvasāchi in *Pathēr Dābī* also remarked "To me everything—truth or falsehood, good or bad—has got no separate meaning, no separate existence other than the necessity of 'Pathēr Dābī'. This is the creed, the guiding principle of my life. This is my mode of existence, this is what I am, my candid realisation. You speak of the ultimate truth, the eternal truth—these meaningless, hollow words may be very precious to you, may be you hold these in high esteem, with great reverence, but there is no greater a trick to befool the ignorants. I do not lie, I create truth at the dictate of necessity." By this he means that the necessity of 'Pathēr Dābī' is inseparably linked with the cause of national independence. And, again, the question of all-round development of the country is inextricably linked with the question of national independence. So what is a necessity for the freedom struggle is the necessity of 'Pathēr Dābī' and hence it is the truth to Sabvasāchi. Just see what he says immediately afterwards "The necessity of Sabvasāchi and that of Brajēndra are not one and the same." Here he wants to differentiate between impersonal or social necessity and the petty necessity of an individual. Otherwise, anyone may try to pass on his petty personal necessity as social necessity. So, by necessity he does not mean the necessity of an individual. He wants to point out what is the real, impersonal and historical necessity of life and society. So Sabvasāchi explains to Bhāratī "If taking lives becomes indispensable for the sake of freedom, I would not hesitate even to have a blood bath—but remember, the necessity of Sabvasāchi and that of Brajēndra are not one and the same." Since Brajēndra's realisation of necessity is not identical with that of Sabvasāchi he takes life out of personal vengeance. Whether he runs a risk or not, he does not miss a chance to kill. But it is Sabvasāchi who shows utmost magnanimity to Apūrba for whose treachery his life is dangerously at stake. When all others stick to a blind and mechanical sense of discipline, failing to realise that discipline is also a by product of necessity and gets remoulded according to necessity, and are very much eager to condemn Apūrba to death, then none else than Sabvasāchi, whose life is extremely endangered by Apūrba, comes to his rescue. See, how amazing is his approach and argument. He says "What Apūrba Bāhu has done cannot be undone. We will have to face the consequences—whether we punish him or not." As we judge today, following the dialectical methodology, that a confused man may cause great harm to us and so also can a confirmed agent of the enemy, but these two persons should never be put at par. Similarly, Sabvasāchi saved Apūrba because he could differentiate between a traitor and a genuinely confused and weak man. So, he says to Bhāratī about Apūrba "Believe me, he is really not so mean, not so petty. He is educated and gentle. He, too, feels the shame of foreign domination. He also, like most of the Bengali youths, sincerely desires the country's independence and well-being." Again, he says "Apūrba is not a traitor. He loves his motherland from the core of his heart. But like most—well, let me not criticise my own people, but very weak." Sabvasāchi wants to say that in spite of these qualities, Apūrba is very weak a man. He is as weak as many a Bengali



are. Yet the beauty and charm that developed centring round the lives of Apūrba and Bhāratī, have these no worth? That is why Sabyasāchī says to Bhāratī: "The beauty that has bloomed out of the relation between you two, man and woman—is it of so little worth that I shall allow a brute like Brajendra to destroy it? Only because of this Bhāratī, only for this—or otherwise, do we care for a life? No, not a whit." In literature, Saratchandra was the first to introduce these concepts in our soil.

...It is true that the literary works of Saratchandra, in the main, are not on workers' lives. But it is also not true that he had not thought over and had not dealt with the problems of the workers and peasants at all. In some novels he has dealt with these and in *Pathēr Dābī* working class movement has assumed much importance. It is noteworthy here that in those days he even organised a 'socialist group' at neighbouring places of Calcutta. ...Once in the course of a discussion on workers' movement, he gave a note of caution: "Look, the workers of our country are not yet awakened, they are not organised. Unbridled exploitation and ruthless oppression are let loose on them. Today, your service is indispensable for rousing, imbibing and organising them; you should devote yourselves to this task. But, remember, the day they will rise up, the day they will be organised, their leadership will emerge from among themselves. Your service that day will no longer be necessary. You must be prepared mentally so that you can then hand over the task of conducting their struggles to their own leaders happily and voluntarily. Remember, while you are engaged in organising them, let not an urge grow in you to lead them for ever." In *Pathēr Dābī*, Saratchandra has expressed views on the objective of workers' struggles, which are almost akin to the Marxist concept of class struggle. Yet, in reality, he was basically an advocate of the petty bourgeois revolutionism and bourgeois humanism. But because Saratchandra was the torch-bearer of revolutionary humanism, he came very close to the Marxist thoughts and ideas that were making inroads in the national liberation movement of our country in those days. Hence he says about religion through Sabyasāchī: "All religions are deceptions—superstitions of the ancient days. There is no greater enemy of humanity than this." But even to the petty bourgeois revolutionaries such a concept was quite inconceivable. Only the so-called intellectuals, the pedlars of tall talks, who cannot grasp the underlying significance of these ideas in Saratchandra's literature, say: 'He has written stories about the landlords. He is a *pakshalar sahityik*. Is there any high aesthetics in Saratchandra's literature?'—and so forth. These are the critics, the so-called intellectuals, who talk big in public meetings, but are not ashamed a bit of depriving the next moment their brothers of all properties, denying sustenance to their widows and even not of hesitating to get their mothers insulted by their wives.

There are other beautiful aspects, too, in Saratchandra's literature. I feel the necessity to discuss some of these. For example, the concept of freedom of love that grew in the early phase of the bourgeois democratic revolution—Saratchandra tried to give an expression to that very concept in his novel *Śēṣ Praśna*. But this bourgeois concept of freedom of love suffers from one-sidedness. What the European bourgeoisie actually practised in life, in the name of freedom, did reduce this concept to a privilege, a licence. As against the age-old obscurantism, religious fanaticism, the mentality to lend permanence to things through codes and axioms—Saratchandra in his novel *Śēṣ Praśna*, with care and sympathy, very beautifully portrayed Kamal as a living protest. He has portrayed Rājēn, side by side, to show the one-sidedness of Kamal's approach. But we do not get this concept either in the classical humanist literature, or in the literature of Renaissance. This is a feature unique to Saratchandra's literature only.

In *Śēṣ Praśna* Rājēn tells Kamal that he would leave Harēndra's 'asram'. "Because", he says, "we have nothing in common, either in our views or in our method of work; affection and love are the only bonds." Kamal replies: "What could be greater than this, Rājēn? When the minds have met, let there be difference of opinion. If views differ or methods of work vary, does it matter much? All would think alike, all would do alike—only then they can live together—why should it be so? What is education worth, if one cannot respect the views of others?" In reply, Rājēn says: "I do not undermine the union of minds, but to declare it loudly to be

the only thing has now-a-days become a fashion for the intellectuals. ...As if only the mind exists in the world and the rest are all unreal—nothing but illusions. This is thoroughly erroneous." Just see how Kamal who defeated all one by one, by her irrefutable arguments, is herself outwitted by Rājēn! In Kamal's opinion, mind seems to be everything, and social customs, views—all these are meaningless. Rājēn says to Kamal: "You were saying that the ability to respect different views is the hall-mark of education, but do you know who can respect all opinions? Only he who has no opinion of his own. Education may help one to tolerate but not respect opposing views." His contention here is that education may enable one to tolerate opposite views and put up with it. See, how close is this understanding to what we call philosophical tolerance! Only he who has no opinion of his own can respect opposing views.

Again, he is saying that union of minds alone is not enough—social ceremonies also count; therefore, he tells Kamal that such a great love between Śibnāth and Kamal could die out so easily, probably because the existing social customs of marriage were ignored. So, he asks Kamal: "Have you ever given any thought as to how much this deception in ceremony contributed to the dying out of your love?" Because, ceremonies too have got a role to play. It is not that love would have not died if only the ceremonies, had been properly performed. But still, it cannot be said that the deception in the ceremonies did not contribute at all to the dying out of love between them. Consequently, Rājēn argues in his own way: "My only concern is identity of views and unity of purpose; I bother little whether minds meet or not." This is a sort of mechanical materialist thinking.

...In *Pathēr Dābī*, likewise, Saratchandra portrayed Sabyasāchī in this vein. Anything noble and tender received Sabyasāchī's attention and honour. But he had hardly any time to ponder over the finer feelings of human mind. So, Sumitrā compares him with a boiler—cool and calm outside, but a blazing fire within. One day Sumitrā was passing by a workshop along with Bhāratī. Suddenly, the boiler-lid was opened—inside was a roaring blazing fire. Seeing this, Sumitrā heaved a deep sigh. She said: "Mark this machine, Bhāratī, and you will understand your Doktor Babu!" What she meant was, like the boiler, only the passion for freedom was blazing in him and all else—love, affection, tenderness—were burnt to ashes. But that everything in him has not been reduced to ashes—the way he saves the life of Apūrbā, makes it amply clear. His most sweet and affectionate relation with Bhāratī also bears testimony to it. But he could hardly pause to ponder over this, it was a luxury he could ill-afford. Almost similar is Rājēn. In the depiction of such characters, we find the influence of a mechanical approach in Saratchandra. But, still, what I want to point out is that Saratchandra was free from the one-sidedness from which the European litterateurs, who fought for freedom of love, suffered. This, too, in the then social condition played a great revolutionary role.

...To meet the need of the hour, if you are to give birth to the proletarian culture and proletarian literature which may be called the post-Rabindro and post-Saratchandra literature, you can do it only when you have been able to realise thoroughly and exhaust completely the most revolutionary trend of humanist literature which was reflected in Saratchandra, that is when you would be able to exhaust in the process of assimilating in you all the essence of the revolutionary humanist values reflected in Saratchandra's literature. Only then you will be able to give birth to the most advanced culture of the present era—the proletarian culture. Because, if the standard of the proletarian culture is lower than that of the bourgeois humanist culture, that is if it reflects inferior ethical and aesthetic standard to that of Rabindranath's and Saratchandra's literature, then it would not only fail to serve the purpose, but would break the very moral backbone of the working class movement and would ultimately pay dividend to the bourgeoisie. The proletariat cannot destroy the bourgeois society with anything inferior to that of the bourgeoisie. The working class movement can destroy the bourgeois social system only by means superior in all respects

to what the bourgeoisie have been able to produce in the fields of ideology, politics and literature. Hence, if the torch-bearers of proletarian culture cannot understand and appreciate properly the literature which reflected the most revolutionary bourgeois humanist thought of the then society, the literature that had built up a very high standard of thought, art and aesthetics, then they would fail to grasp the essence of proletarian literature itself and may at best produce one mechanically, as per stereotyped formula.

...If we can properly appreciate Saratchandra's literature that would help create moral-ethical base for the progressive movement of today and would be able through conflict and interaction of ideas and views, to find out a way for attaining truth. As because we have forgotten Saratchandra the moral, ethical, cultural and aesthetic standard of political and literary-cultural movement in our country has been shattered. As a result, we have become rootless. So, we talk big, but do not cultivate noble emotions and delicate feelings. No movement is a mere intellectual exercise, it demands both intellect and emotion. Revolution, too, is not an exception. Thoughts are advancing, if emotion and feeling lag behind then surely a gap would appear between the two. In that case movement as well as the thought would eventually go astray, leading to a blind alley. I note with deep anguish the absence of ethics and morality at all levels of the presentday mass movements in our country. You know, I am a man of politics, a man of left and communist movement. Why the organisers invite me to such literary gatherings, they know it well. Because of their insistence, sometimes I have to come. But being a man of the political movement the thing that strikes me time and again is that the moral and ethical basis and the cultural tune of these movements have completely collapsed—today most of the movements are virtually reduced to slogan-mongering. That is why, wave after wave movements are surging forth, cries reverberating—"change we want, revolution we aspire." Men are dying, youths are sacrificing their lives. But no change is coming, no revolution is taking place. Through such sporadic movements that are thoroughly devoid of culture and ethics, however sincerely you may struggle, however much sacrifices be made—changes will never come. On the basis of definite political objective and morality, if the mass movements are guided, then and only then the morals of the nation will be revitalised.

...Sarat-cult, discussions and exchanges on thoughts and ideas of Saratchandra, have become more imperative in our society, because we are completely cut off from the cultural heritage of the past—today we have become rootless. We are failing to maintain the continuity with the high cultural standard attained during the days of our freedom movement. Lofty phrases we are culling from the outside world, no doubt, but we have lost the link with the high cultural tune once developed on our own soil.

We have to establish that link once again, although a contradiction with it is inevitable today, because Saratchandra was a believer in the petty bourgeois, revolutionism and bourgeois humanism. But we will have to accomplish the task of working class revolution, Socialist Revolution—the revolution for the overthrow of capitalism. So, we shall have to go a stage further in our revolutionary struggles. But we shall forge ahead only when we have been able to evaluate and appreciate Saratchandra properly—when, grasping him, we shall be able to assimilate the essence, rejecting the inadequate and useless, when we shall be able to absorb the wealth of his literature and thereby exhaust it completely, when there will be nothing more left for us to take from him. Unfortunately, we could take nothing from him, rather we have missed the link itself. Even the advanced outlook and sense of values Saratchandra reflected are absent in us. How then could we be the vanguards of revolution today? So we have to know Saratchandra, we have to study and understand him.

*Translated by a Commission set up by  
the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Centre of India*

# সর্বতোভদ্র কথাশিল্পের স্রষ্টা

সুবোধ ঘোষ

মাঝে মাঝে দেখতে পাই, কোন এক সমালোচক শব্দ-সাহিত্যের জনপ্রিয়তার কারণ নির্ণয় করতে গিয়ে অনেক কথা বলছেন। জানি না, কোন সমালোচক শব্দ-সাহিত্যকে জাতীয় সাহিত্যের একটি বিশুদ্ধ ও আদর্শোচিত প্রতিচ্ছবি বলে অভিহিত করেছেন কিনা। একদা সমালোচনাব ক্ষেত্রে এই ধারণার প্রাবল্য দেখা দিয়েছিল যে, দেশ ও জাতির সামাজিক অথবা রাজনৈতিক কিংবা অর্থনৈতিক কোন অভ্যুদয়ের আকাঙ্ক্ষা ও প্রয়াসের ভাবানুপ্রাণিত প্রতিবেদন হলো সার্থক জাতীয় সাহিত্যের পরিচয়। আজও বোধ হয় সমালোচক অথবা সাহিত্যবাসিক সমাজের সকলে মনস্বী বাজনাধাষণ বসুব ব্যাখ্যাত নীতি অনুযায়ী 'জাতীয়' সাহিত্যের স্বরূপ নির্ণয় করতে চাইবেন না। কিন্তু মনে হয়, মনস্বী বাজনাধাষণ এসুং বিচাৰিত অভিমত মানা কবে নিয়ে এই সাধারণ সত্যটি স্বীকার করা যায় যে, দেশপ্রেমের প্রেরণা সঞ্চারিত কবীর বাণী-বাহিনীই সার্থক 'জাতীয়' সাহিত্যের নমুনা নয়। অন্য লেখকের রচনার সঙ্গে তুলনা না করে শব্দচন্দ্রের নিজেরই লেখন্য দুই নমুনার মধ্যে তুলনা করে বলা চলে যে পঞ্চদশ দাবীর তুলনায় 'পল্লীসমাজ' জাতীয় সাহিত্যের গুণ লক্ষণ ও তাৎপৰ্য বেশী গ্রহণ করে। কিন্তু প্রশ্ন কবে ও বিচাৰ কবে কবীর প্রয়োজন হয়, শব্দচন্দ্রের মন ও কালিকলমে কোন কৃতিত্ব তার বিচিত্র সাহিত্যকে সত্যিকারের এবং সার্থক 'জাতীয়' সাহিত্য হিসাবে গুণায়িত করেছে।

একটি সত্য স্বীকার না করলে উনিশ ও বিশ শতকের বাংলা কথা-সাহিত্যের আঙ্গিক সৌকর্য এবং গম্যগত অনুবেদনার স্বার্থ নির্ণয় সম্ভব হতে পারে না। স্বীকার করতে হয় যে এ কালের মধ্যে, বাংলা সাহিত্যক্ষেত্রে এমন কিছু প্রতি সফলপ্রসূ প্রতিভার সাক্ষাৎ পাওয়া যায়, যাদের পক্ষে যথার্থ জাতীয় সাহিত্যের মহৎ দৃষ্টান্ত বলে দাবি কবীর কোন দাবি নেই, অথচ সাহিত্য হিসাবে তাদের অন্য আবেদন ও মনোজ্ঞতার স্পষ্ট চমৎকারিতা আছে। মনস্তাত্ত্বিক বলবেন এটা গির্দাহীন সাহিত্যের রূপ ও রীতির ঐশ্বর্য্য আশ্চর্য্য কবীর চমৎকার সফলতার উদাহরণ। এই কৃতিত্ব নিত্য পবানুকৃত ভাবনার ক্রিয়াক্ষণ বলে নির্মিত হতে পারে না। মনোজ্ঞতার কারণে, কিংবা আঙ্গিক সৌষ্ঠবে অভিনবতার কারণে জনসম্মুখে সুপ্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়েছে এহন সাহিত্য যে কোন দেশের কিংবা জাতির সাংস্কৃতিক পরিভ্রমণের একটি বড় সম্বল বটে, কিন্তু জাতির যথার্থ হৃদয়সংস্পর্শ সম্বল নয়। শব্দ-সাহিত্যের সবচেয়ে বড় মহত্ত্ব নিশ্চয় এই যে, এ সাহিত্যের ভাব অনুভব ও প্রসার সঙ্ঘব কবীর প্রিয় শ্যামনামের মতো কানের ভিতর দিয়ে মস্তিষ্ক প্রবেশ লাভ করে। মাথা ঘামিয়ে কিংবা বুদ্ধি-বিচাৰ ও তাত্ত্বিক বিজ্ঞতা নিয়ে এ কাহিনীর তাৎপৰ্য্য লুপ্ত নেবার চেষ্টা করতে হয় না। শব্দ-রচিত গল্প ও উপন্যাসের আবেগ স্বপ্নের জলের মতো আপন মর্মরোলে উদ্বেলিত। পিপাসী জনের পক্ষে স্বচ্ছ-শীতল ভ্রমণের একীকার।

রবীন্দ্রনাথ শরৎচন্দ্রের প্রতিভা ও কৃতিত্বের প্রশংসায় অভিভূত হয়ে বলছেন যে, শরৎ বাঙালীর হৃদয়ে ডুব দিয়েছিলেন, তাই তাঁর গম্প-উপন্যাস (বাঙালী) পাঠকজনের মনের পক্ষে প্রিয়তার আশ্রয় এবং সহজগ্রাহ্যতার ও সমাদরের বস্তু। কবির উক্তির সত্যতা স্বীকার করে নিয়েও এক্ষেত্রে ব্যক্তির পক্ষে শরৎ-সাহিত্য সম্বন্ধে ধারণা গ্রহণ করবার বিষয়ে বিশেষ সতর্ক হবার দরকার হবে। অনুমান করতে হয়, কবি নিশ্চয় একথা বলতে চাননি যে, শরৎচন্দ্র বাঙালীমানুষের হৃদয়ে ডুব দিয়েছিলেন। সাহিত্যের সৃষ্টি ও নির্মাণের ইতিহাসে একটি নিয়ম বস্তুতঃ সার্বিক ও সফল কৃতিত্বের একটি চিরায়ত অভিজ্ঞানে পরিণত হয়েছে। সেই অভিজ্ঞান এই যে, তথ্য-সাহিত্যের কথা বাদ দিয়ে প্রত্যেকটি ভাব-সাহিত্যের ক্ষেত্রে বড় স্রষ্টার প্রতিভা ও মেধার বড় লক্ষণ এই যে, তিনি জনজীবনের হৃদয়ে ডুব দিয়ে রূপ অন্বেষণ করে থাকেন। সামাজিক পরিবেশ, স্থানিক ঘটনা, অর্থনীতিক জনসমস্যা অবর্ত, সবই কথাশিল্পীর দরকারের উপচার বটে, কিন্তু সৃষ্টি নিশ্চয়ই নয়। সৃষ্টি একান্ত ভাবে এবং নিত্যন্ত রূপে হৃদয়ের যাবতীয় ইচ্ছা কামনা ও আবেগের পরাগে সমাকীর্ণ একটি ফুলবন। বিস্তারিত করে বললে বলতে হয়, হৃদয়ের অগ্নিশৃঙ্খলিত একটি স্বাভাবিক প্রয়োজনের উপচার। তত্ত্ব জ্ঞানের দ্বারা নির্বোধিত উপন্যাস এবং আঙ্গিক অভিনবতার আতিশয্যে সমুৎকীর্ণ কোন কাহিনীময় আলোচ্য কখনই জনসাধারণের কাছে এবং বৃহত্তর কালের কাছে হৃদয়ের জ্বলন্ত বলে অনুভূত হতে পারে না। আদর্শিক মহত্বের বিপুল বিস্তার এবং বিবাদ থাকলেও চিন্তাবিনোদক রম্যতার উত্তীর্ণ না হয়ে কোন গম্প-উপন্যাস সাধারণের মর্মগত পরিতৃপ্তির সম্বল বলে বিবেচিত ও স্বীকৃত হবে না।

শরৎচন্দ্রকে এজন্য বাংলা সাহিত্যের আভিনাতে একটি সার্বিক পুষ্পমাল্যের রচয়িতা বলে মনে করা যায়, এবং এক্ষেত্রে তিনি অন্য মহান কৃতিদের তুলনায় বর্ণ-সৌভেব অনেক বেশী সুম্মা সঙ্গারিত করেছেন। একথা বিশ্বাস করবার যুক্তি আছে যে, বাঙালীর হৃদয়ে যিনি ডুব দিয়েছিলেন, সেই শরৎচন্দ্র মানবীয় জীবনের বিশ্বজনীন প্রকৃতির উদাত্ত সমতা ও ঐক্য সম্পর্কে কিছু কম রূপের ঐশ্বর্য পরিবেশন করেননি। রূপ হৃদয়ে ডুব দিয়েছিলেন টুর্গেনিভ ও ডস্টয়ভস্কি, ফরাসী হৃদয়ে ডুব দিয়েছিলেন ভিক্টর হিউগো, ইংরাজ হৃদয়ে ডুব দিয়েছিলেন চার্লস ডিকেন্স—কিন্তু কেউ কি অস্বীকার করতে পারবেন যে, এঁদের রচিত উপন্যাস বিশ্বজনেরও হৃদয়ে ভাব-অনুভবের ব্যাকুলতা উদ্বেলিত করে তুলেছিল? হৃদিরসাকবের অগাধ জলে ডুব দিলে মগ্ন-মগ্নকান্নাই পাওয়া যায়। এবং সেটা বিশ্বজনীন আনন্দ ও প্রসন্নতারই একটি রূপময় সম্বল। বরং বলা চলে, এবং বিশ্বাত ইউরোপীয় সমালোচকদের অভিভূত সংকলিত করলেও প্রমাণিত হবে যে, তাঁরা ‘সিনসিয়ার’ তথা উপলব্ধির অনুগত নিষ্ঠাশীল সাহিত্য বলতে সেই সাহিত্যকেই বুঝেছেন, যে-সাহিত্য মানবীয় হৃদয়বস্তুর সমগ্র বিশ্বাস বেদনা ও সৌন্দর্যের পুষ্পমাল্য। স্বদেশ ও স্বজাতির হৃদয় ছাড়া এক্ষেত্রে কোন ব্যক্তির পক্ষে হৃদয়বস্তুর শিল্পী হওয়া সম্ভব নয়। এবং কোন সন্দেহ নেই যে, ঐতিহাসিক রূপে ও প্রকৃতিতে হৃদয়বস্তুর বিশেষ কোন একটি ভৌগোলিক সীমায়তনের মধ্যে বিশেষ কোন জনজীবনের আত্মস্তিক পরিচর্যার সম্পদ নয়। বিশ্বজনীন অনুভবের যত বিশ্বাসের অথবা ব্যাকুলতার দ্বাদ ব্যক্তির আপন সমাজজীবনেরই মানুষগুলির হৃদয়ে নিহিত আছে।

মনসী রাজনারায়ণ বসুর অভিভূতের একটি কথা আর-একবার স্মরণ করে নিয়ে বলা যায়, আমাদের বাংলা সাহিত্যের অন্তর্ক সুন্দর ও সুনির্মিত স্থাপত্য বস্তুতঃ সুন্দর ও সুনির্মিত পরানুকরণ। অর্থাৎ বিদেশীয় তথা পাশ্চাত্য ভাব-সাহিত্যের কায় অনুকরণ করে নবরূপের গম্প এবং উপন্যাসের রচনা। ভারতীয় শিল্পশাস্ত্রে একটি বৃহৎ নীতির অনুমোদন এই যে, শূন্য তুলিকা ও বাণিকাভঙ্গের সাফল্যের দ্বারা ছবি এবং মূর্তির রূপন্যাস সম্পূর্ণ হয় না। চাই ‘লাবণ্য যোজনা’। শরৎচন্দ্রের কথা-সাহিত্যের বিচারে ভারতীয় শিল্পশাস্ত্রের এই নীতিটিকে প্রযুক্ত করলে এই সিদ্ধান্ত স্বাভাবিক সূত্রে এসে পড়ে যে, শরৎচন্দ্র ছিলেন কাহিনীতে এই ‘লাবণ্য যোজনা’র কৃতিত্ব সবচেয়ে বড় সফলতার অধিকারী। সামাজিক জীবনের প্রতিচ্ছবি হিসাবে শরৎচন্দ্রের গম্প-উপন্যাস নিখুঁত বাস্তবতানিষ্ঠ কৃতিত্বের নিদর্শন। সামাজিক ন্যায়-অন্যায়ের সংঘাত এবং নরনারীর প্রণয় ও পরিণয়ের নানা মানসিক ক্রিয়া-প্রতিক্রিয়ার বিশ্লেষণ ও তাঁর উপন্যাসের একটি বড় বৈশিষ্ট্য। কিন্তু এই বাহ্য : এর আগে এগিয়ে যেয়ে বলতে হয়, তিনি নিত্যন্ত সামাজিক ভাবনার মানচিত্রের মধ্যে বর্ণসম্পাত করে তাঁর কাহিনীর আয়তন নির্মাণ করেননি। তিনি মানবতার বিশ্বজনীন আবেদন রূপায়িত করেছেন।

শরৎচন্দ্রের গম্প-উপন্যাসের রচনা ও নির্মাণের রীতি-নীতি সম্পর্কে কোন বিজ্ঞ সমালোচকের কোন বিশ্বাসের কথা কখনও শুনোঁছি বলে মনে পড়েনা। বরং এটাই সাধারণ ধারণা হিসাবে প্রচারিত হয়েছে যে, শরৎচন্দ্রের লিখনভঙ্গীর মধ্যে বিশেষ কোন অভিনবতার প্রমাণ পরিস্ফুট নয়। খুবই সরল ও প্রাজ্ঞ বলে শরৎচন্দ্রের লিখনভঙ্গীর প্রশংসা করা হয়ে থাকে। বলতে হয়, এই প্রশংসা বস্তুত লেখকীয় প্রতিভার পক্ষে সর্বোচ্চ অভিনন্দন। এই প্রশংসা নিয়মকণ্ঠে উচ্চারিত হলেও বুঝতে হবে যে, শরৎচন্দ্র কোন

বিশ্বদেশীয় সাহিত্য-কৃতিত্বের তথ্য ও তত্ত্বের দ্বারা একটুও প্রভাবিত হননি। তাঁর প্রতিভা যেন স্বতঃ-উৎসারিত আবেগে কম্পোজিত হয়ে জীবনের সঙ্গীত শুনিয়েছে। জীবনের সত্যকে ধরে রাখে, মমতাকে মধুর করে রাখে এবং প্রীতিকে ত্যাগযুত করে রাখে মানবীর হৃদয়বিস্তার যে অণু-পরমাণু, শিল্পী শরৎচন্দ্র তাই নিয়ে ও তাই দিয়ে কাহিনীর প্রাণ মন কায়া ও আত্মার প্রধান রূপণা সুসম্ভব করেছেন। বাংলা সাহিত্যের সৌভাগ্যের বিষয় এবং সম্মানের বিষয় এই যে, শরৎচন্দ্রকে বাংলার ডিকেন্স কিংবা হিউগো বলে আখ্যাত হবার বিড়ম্বনায় আক্রান্ত হতে হয়নি। তিনি 'সিনসিয়ার' সাহিত্যের, যথার্থ জাতীয় সাহিত্যের এক মহান শক্তির প্রতীক। শরৎচন্দ্রের কৃতিত্ব ও জনপ্রিয়তার ব্যাপ্তিতে এই সত্যই প্রমাণিত হয়েছে যে, তিনি বিংশ শতাব্দীর বাংলা সাহিত্যের ক্ষেত্রে শুধু একজন আদর্শোচিত 'দরদী' কথাসিল্পী নন, তিনি তাঁর ভাবে অনুভবে কম্পনায় ও উপলব্ধিতে একজন, এবং সম্ভবত একমাত্র, আত্মপ্রতিভায় আশ্রিত এবং স্ব-মহিমাম্বিত সাহিত্যিক।

সামাজিক চেতনা সত্যিই মানবিক চেতনার একটি আনুষঙ্গিক প্রকার। এই খুবই স্বাভাবিক আকর্ষণে কথাসিল্পীর মন সমাজের ভাল-মন্দ অবস্থা এবং পরিণামের বিচার করেছেন। সামাজিক সমস্যা অবলম্বন করে সার্থক উপন্যাস রচিত হয়েছে, একথাও সত্য। কিন্তু সঙ্গে সঙ্গে এই সত্যও স্মরণ করতে হয় যে, যুগের জীবন এক জায়গায় এবং একই সমস্যার ভারে মগ্ন হয়ে দাঁড়িয়ে থাকে না। সমস্যার শেষ সীমা অতিক্রম করে মানবীয় জীবনের আগ্রহ নতুন অবস্থার পথে এগিয়ে যায়। সমস্যাটি আর থাকে না। কিন্তু জীবন নামক নিবিশেষ সত্যটি থেকে যায়। সার্থক কাহিনী-সাহিত্যের গুণ-লক্ষণের সবচেয়ে বড় কথা এই যে, সমস্যার চমৎকার ভূষণ অপসারিত হয়ে গেলেও কাহিনীর ভূষণ থেকে যায়। সমস্যার গুরুত্ব শূন্য করে দিয়েও কাহিনীতে নিহিত জীবনের রম্য নিবেদন একটি সুচিরস্থায়ী সম্পদ হয়ে কাহিনীকে অমরতা প্রদান করে, এবং সেই অমরতা চন্দ্র-সূর্যের মতো চিরায়ত না হয়েও যুগ থেকে অন্য যুগের প্রদীপ হয়ে সাংস্কৃতিক জীবন ভাস্করিত করে তোলে। শরৎচন্দ্রের কাহিনী-সাহিত্য সম্পর্কেও বলা যায়, যুগজীবনের সমস্যাগুলি যখন আর থাকবে না, তখনও নতুন দিনের ভোরে শরৎচন্দ্রের রচিত কাহিনীর অন্তর্নিহিত মানবতার শাস্ত্র আবেদনের প্রভাবে পাঠকজনের অনুভবের আকাশ অরুণিত করে রাখবে।

শরৎ-সাহিত্যের সমীক্ষাতে আরও একটি সত্য ধরা পড়ে, যাকে একটি শিক্ষার সত্য বলে আখ্যাত করা চলে। বিশেষ করে ভারতীয় কথাসিল্পের পরিচর্যা ও প্রয়োজনের বিষয়টি স্মরণে রেখে এই সিদ্ধান্ত মুকুটের ঘোষণা করা চলে যে, শরৎচন্দ্রের সাহিত্য ভারতীয় সুদী ও শিল্পীর প্রতিভাকে বাইরের কোন বিশাল কৃতিত্বের প্রতি উদাসীন না হয়েও একটি 'বৈধ অহংকারের' স্বাক্ষর হয়ে থাকবার শিক্ষা দিয়েছে। শক্তিসম্পন্ন প্রাতিভাধরের সাংস্কৃতিক চিন্তা এবং আচার-বিচারে আয়িস্টটল যে বৈধ অহংকারের প্রশ্রয় অনুমোদন করেছেন, সেই অহংকার। সাহিত্য অবশ্যই নিকট পরিণামের আবেগে পড়ে মিথ্যার সস্তারে পরিণত হবে, যদি প্রতীক লেখক ও শিল্পীর আন্তরিক স্বভাবের মধ্যে আত্মিক স্বাধীনতার প্রকর্ষ না থাকে। কবি কামিনী রায় হেমচন্দ্রের কার্যকলাপ আলোচনা করতে গিয়ে আক্ষেপের সুরে এক ধরনের আধুনিক রীতিশীলতার প্রতিবাদ করেছেন। তাঁর অভিযোগের কথা : আধুনিককালে কাব্যের বিচার করতে ভাব রূপ ও তাৎপর্ষের সৌষ্টব্য ততটা বিবেচিত হয়না, যতটা বিবেচিত হয় কাব্যের আত্মিক রীতির অভিনবতা। এক্ষেত্রে রীতির শাস্ত্রিক মুখরতা, যেটা শুধু কানের উপর প্রভাব বিস্তার করে, তারই সমাদর বেশী। শরৎচন্দ্রের রচিত কাহিনী-সাহিত্য মহিলা কবি কামিনী রায়ের প্রস্তাবিত তত্ত্বটিরই একটি সার্থক সত্যতার নিদর্শন। শরৎচন্দ্রের কাহিনী-সাহিত্য ভাষাতে ও ভঙ্গীতে অচ্ছাদ-সরসী-নীরের মতো নিগূঢ় অথচ স্বচ্ছতায় প্রাজল। তিনি টেকনিকের বৈভব প্রদর্শন করবার জন্য চেষ্টাকৃত কোন সাধনা স্বীকার করেছিলেন বলে মনে হয় না। এমন বিখ্যাত গল্প ও উপন্যাসের সংখ্যা কম নয়, যারা নিতান্ত ভঙ্গী তথা টেকনিকের বৈভব সম্ভব করবার ইচ্ছাকৃত অধাবসায়ের বড় নমুনা। সন্দেহ করতে হয়, খ্যাতির সম্মল থাকলেও এ ধরনের কারিগরী কাব্যতায় সম্বন্ধ কাহিনীগুলির ভাগ্য বড়ই নম্বর। আমাদের সৌভাগ্য, আমাদেরই ঘরের কথাসিল্পী শরৎচন্দ্র ঘরোয়া হৃদয়ের সহস্র বর্ণসূচমা দিয়ে সরল ও প্রাজল যে কাহিনী-সাহিত্য রচনা করেছেন সেটা ভারতীয় শাস্ত্রবিধি অনুযায়ী নগর নির্মাণের আদর্শোচিত স্থাপত্যের মতো রূপে ও গুণে সর্বতোভদ্র, বাংলার সমাজ জীবনের সুখদুঃখ প্রতিচ্ছবিত করেও বিশ্বজনীন আবেদনে চিরপ্রসঙ্গ।

# A writer of universal appeal

Subodh Ghose

I occasionally come across critics saying many things by way of explaining the popularity of Saratchandra's writings. I do not know if any critic has described his works as a perfect and ideal specimen of national literature. There was a time when the idea strongly prevailed in the critical field that the mark of true 'national' literature lay in its being an ideological embodiment of the aspirations and efforts towards some social or political or economic upheaval on the part of the country or the nation. Many critics, even today, may be disposed to determine the character of 'national' literature in accordance with the principle enunciated by the great Rajnarayan Basu. But it would appear that, in agreement with the opinions of Rajnarayan, we can admit the truth that, for the purpose of inspiring patriotism, the poetic narrative cannot be regarded as the proper form of 'national' literature. Without resorting to comparisons with other writers we can, by comparing two specimens of Saratchandra's own writings, say that the qualities, the symptoms and the significance of 'national' literature are to be found more in *Pallī-Samāj* than in *Pathēr Dābī*. But it has to be realised through a process of enquiry and discrimination which particular virtues of his mind and pen have invested his writings with the qualities of 'national' literature.

It would not be possible to correctly estimate the technical perfection and the inner emotional content of Bengali prose fiction without recognising certain truth. It has to be admitted that during the period in question we come across in the field of Bengali literature a number of prolific geniuses who cannot lay claim to the creation of truly great 'national' literature, but whose writings, nevertheless, have other kinds of literary appeal and charm in no small degree. The psychologist will describe these as delightfully successful examples of assimilating the wealth of the forms and methods of foreign literary works. This achievement does not deserve to be branded as the sheer product of imitative thought. The kind of literature that has established itself in popular favour by virtue of its aesthetic charm or by the novelty of its technical excellence is no doubt an important source of the cultural satisfaction of any country or nation; but it cannot satisfy the deeper yearnings of its soul. Surely the greatest merit of Sarat literature lies in the fact that its ideas, its emotions and its charm pass through the ear and

communicate themselves to the inmost soul, as the chanting of the dear name of Shyam communicated itself to the Vaisnav poet. One does not have to rack one's brain or to strain one's judgement or one's theoretical learning to get to the meaning of these stories. The emotions in the stories and novels of Saratchandra are effused by their own inner impulsion like the waters of a fountain. A sure promise of soothing satisfaction for the thirsty soul.

While expressing warm admiration for the genius and the achievements of Saratchandra, Rabindranath said that Sarat had plumbed the depths of the Bengali soul and that was why his stories and novels were so dear, so easily acceptable and so admirable to the Bengali reader. Even after admitting the truth of the poet's remark, it would be advisable for the individual reader to be on his guard in the matter of forming an opinion on Saratchandra's writings. One can guess that the poet surely had not meant to say that Saratchandra had delved into the heart of the Bengali national sentiment. In the history of literary creation and craftsmanship one principle has virtually become the eternal touchstone of success and fulfilment. The principle is that in all fields of creative literature (i.e. leaving out informative literature) the true mark of the genius and the intellect of the great creator is that he dives down into the life of the people and looks for his images there. Social environment, local events, the whirlpool of the people's economic problems, all are, doubtless, necessary materials for the novelist; but they certainly do not constitute creation. Creation is wholly and exclusively a flowery grove charged with the pollen of all the desires, longings and emotions of the heart. To explain it further, the fiery sparks of the heart are likewise a naturally necessary ingredient. No novel which is a presentation of theoretical knowledge and no fictional portrait copiously wrought with technical novelties can ever be felt as a treasure of the heart by the people or by posterity. However great its ideological magnitude and the contradictions involved in it, no novel or story can be a source of the people's inmost satisfaction unless it attains to the level of aesthetic enchantment.

For this reason Saratchandra can be looked upon as the creator of a lovely plot of flower garden in the courtyard of Bengali literature. And compared with other great performers, he has in this field created a richer charm of colour and perfume. There is reason to believe that the Saratchandra who had delved into the depths of the Bengali soul had provided us with no less rich images of the great unity and uniformity of universal human life. Turgenev and Dostoyevsky had delved down into the Russian soul; Victor Hugo had delved into the French soul, and Charles Dickens into the English. But would anyone be able to deny that their novels have aroused ideological and emotional responses in the heart of universal humanity as well? One invariably comes across gems if one descends into the bottomless ocean of the heart. And it is an image of universal joy and satisfaction. It can rather be said—and references to the opinions of well-known European critics will confirm it—that by 'sincere', that is genuine literature based on feeling, they have meant the kind of literature which is a flowering of the entire world of the wonder, the agony and the beauty of the human heart. It is not possible for anyone to become a delineator of the human heart without understanding the heart of one's own country and one's own nation. And there is no doubt that, in their historical nature and form, the emanations of the heart are not in any particular geographical context a specific instrument for rendering service to a specific people's life. The materials of all the wonderings and all the longings of the universal soul are implicit in the heart of the people who surround one in one's own social life.

We can once again recall the opinions of the great Ramnarayan Basu and say that many of the beautiful and well-formed edifices of Bengali literature are actually fine and well-executed imitations, that is stories and novels of fresh form based on ideas contained in Western literature.



One of the great principles of Indian aesthetics tells us that the formal execution of a portrait or an image cannot be accomplished merely with deft touches of the brush or the chisel. What is needed is the touch of living radiance. If we apply this principle of Indian aesthetics to the consideration of Sarat literature, we shall come to the natural conclusion that Saratchandra could claim the greatest success in adding this touch of living radiance to the story. The stories and novels of Saratchandra are instances of flawlessly realistic portraiture of social life. The clash of social good and evil and the analyses of the various mental reactions involved in affairs of love and marriage form an important feature of his novels. But even this is external. We have to go further and say that he has not built up the dimensions of his story by merely touching up with colour the map of his social thought. He has rendered the universal feelings of the human heart.

I do not remember to have come across any wondering comment about Saratchandra's technique of composition and construction from any learned critic. Rather, it is the common idea that there is hardly any touch of pronounced novelty in Saratchandra's methods of composition. His way of writing is praised for its remarkable simplicity and clarity. It must be said that this praise actually implies the highest appreciation for a writer's talents. Even if this praise is uttered in a low key, we have to understand that Saratchandra was not influenced in the slightest degree by any facts or theories of foreign literary accomplishments. It was as though his genius had sung the song of life, gushing forth with the spontaneity of a fountain. Saratchandra, the artist, has accomplished major delineations of the life, the mind, the body and the soul of a story with those atoms and molecules of the propensities of the human heart which preserve the truth of life, preserve the sweetness of the sentiments and keep love wedded to the spirit of sacrifice. It is a matter of honour and good fortune for Bengali literature that we did not have to face the embarrassment of having to describe Saratchandra as the Dickens or the Hugo of Bengal. He is a great and powerful creator of 'sincere' literature, of truly 'national' literature. The widening popularity of Saratchandra's achievements has only proved that he is not only an ideally sympathetic story teller in twentieth century Bengali literature, he is, in his ideas and his feelings, in his imagination and his understanding, an author, and probably the only one, reliant on and glorified by his own genius.

Social consciousness is undoubtedly an aspect of the human consciousness. So by a natural attraction, the mind of the novelist has occupied itself with social good and evil and their ultimate results. It is also true that preoccupation with social problems has produced good novels. At the same time, however, we have to remember that the life of an age does not stand still at the same stage, burdened with the same problems. The dynamic human mind passes over its existing problems and forges ahead, questing after new things. The old problem is no longer there, but the undistinguished truth called life lingers on. The highest mark of fictional literature is that even after the pressure of the problem has relaxed, the charm of the story remains. Even after the importance of the problem has vanished altogether, the charming portrayal of life in the story remains a treasure which invests the story with immortality. And although that immortality may not be eternal like the sun and the moon, it goes on lighting the lamp from one age to another and thus illuminates cultural life. It can likewise be said of Saratchandra's writings that even when the problems of the age concerned will no more be there, the eternal human appeal of his stories will continue to flush the mind of the reader with its rich tints amidst the dawning of a new age.

Yet another truth emerges from a review of Sarat literature—a truth which has an educational value. Keeping especially in view the question of nourishing and serving the needs

of Bengali literature, it can be unequivocally proclaimed that Saratchandra's writings have taught the talented Indian artist and literature to keep their heads high in a spirit of 'legitimate pride' without being indifferent to the great achievements of the external world. It is this which Aristotle has recommended as the legitimate pride reflected in the cultural thought and the manners of a man of genius. Literature would surely turn into a vehicle of falsehood and meet a lamentable fate, if there is no urge for spiritual freedom in the consciousness of the creator, the writer, the artist. The poetess Kamini Ray, while reviewing Hemchandra's writings, has in a tone of regret protested against a kind of modern formalism. She thinks that in judging literature in the present age more emphasis is put on the novelty of technique than on the excellence of idea, expression and suggestion. In such an estimate, it is the verbal resonance of the technique, which only affects the ear, that is most valued. The ideas of the poetess Kamini Ray have a significant bearing on the estimation of Saratchandra's fictional writings. In their expression and style Saratchandra's novels are like the deep and yet crystal clear waters of a great lake. It does not look as though he ever deliberately tried to exhibit any technical excellence. Stories and novels which are striking examples of deliberate efforts at sheer technical and stylistic exhibition are by no means rare. One apprehends that, in spite of their prevailing fame, stories of such pure technical finesse are doomed to transience. It is our good fortune that the simple and lucid tales woven by our homely novelist Saratchandra out of the myriad-coloured effusions of our homely heart are in their form as much as in their content open-hearted like the ideal mode of urban architecture recommended in ancient India. While reflecting the joys and sorrows of Bengali social life, they are invested with a steadfast appeal for universal humanity.

*Translated by Gouri Prasad Ghosh*



# শরৎচন্দ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায়

রমেশচন্দ্র মজুমদার

সারা বাংলা শবৎ শতবার্ষিকী কমিটি কর্তৃক কিছু লিখিতে অনুরোধ হইয়াছিল। বয়স অষ্টাশী, শবীর অসুস্থ, বেশী কিছু লিখিবার ইচ্ছা থাকিলও সাধ্য না শক্তি নাই। বিশেষতঃ শরৎচন্দ্র সম্বন্ধে ইতিপূর্বে বিভিন্ন সময়ে তিন চারটি প্রবন্ধ লিখিয়াছি। তবে বিশেষ কারণে তাঁহাব সম্বন্ধে কয়েকটি কথা তখন লিখি নাই—আজ মনে হইতেছে কাহারও নিকট অপ্রিয় হইলেও ঐতিহাসিক সত্যের মর্যাদা রক্ষার জন্য তাহা লিখিয়া রাখাই উচিত। তাহাব পূর্বে কিছুটা পুনবুজ্জি হইলেও শরৎচন্দ্রের চরিত্রের বৈশিষ্ট্যের লক্ষণ হিসাবে একটি কাহিনী দিয়া আরম্ভ করি।

শরৎচন্দ্রের সহিত পরিচয় থাকিলেও প্রথম তাঁহাব ঘনিষ্ঠ সাঙ্গাশে আসি পঞ্চাশ বৎসর পূর্বে বঙ্গীয় সাহিত্য সম্মেলনের মুনীগঞ্জ অধিবেশনে (১৩০২ সাল)। এই সম্মেলনে সাহিত্য শাখার সভাপতি ছিলেন শরৎচন্দ্র আর ইতিহাস শাখার সভাপতি ছিলাম আমি। বিস্তীর্ণ ময়দানেব মধ্যে একটি স্থল বা ছাত্রাবাসেব একটি কক্ষে আমাদের দুইজনেব বাসস্থান নির্দিষ্ট ছিল। সুতরাং আলাপ পরিচয় বেশ জমিয়া উঠিল। আহাৰাদির পব সভাস্থলে আমাদের লইয়া যাইবার জন্য স্বেচ্ছাসেবক আসিল। শরৎচন্দ্র ও আমি কাপড়-চোপড় পরিয়া প্রস্তুত হইলাম। কিন্তু অকস্মাৎ এক বাধা উপস্থিত হইল। শরৎচন্দ্র সভাপতিব অভিভাষণটি লিখিয়া আনিয়াছিলেন, কিন্তু যাত্রাকালে তাহা খুঁজিয়া পাইলেন না। প্রথমে বাস্তব বিছানা পরে জামার পকেটে প্রভৃতি তন্ন তন্ন করিয়া খোঁজা হইল, কিন্তু কোথাও তাহা মিলিল না। শরৎচন্দ্র বাস্তব হইয়া পড়িলেন, বলিলেন, ‘এই একটু আগে আমি এই খাটে বসে ওটা পড়েছি, এখন কোথায় গেল?’ তখন আমার মনে পড়িল যে কিছুক্ষণ আগে শরৎচন্দ্র তামাক খাইবার সময়—কলিকটি গরম ছিল বলিয়াই হউক অথবা অন্য যে কোন কারণেই হউক—খানিকটা কাগজে হাতের আঙ্গুল ঢাকিয়া হুকটি ধরিয়া তামাক খাইয়াছিলেন; পরে তামাক খাওয়া শেষ হইলে ঐ কাগজ দূরে ছুঁড়িয়া ফেলিয়া দিয়াছিলেন। চাহিয়া দেখিলাম ঘরের এক কোণে বেণের পুটুলির মত সেই কাগজেব মোড়কটি পড়িয়া আছে। আমি সেটি কুড়াইয়া আনিয়া দেখি খুব ছোট ছোট অক্ষরে কি সব লেখা আছে—মনে হইল একটি সাহিত্য-বিষয়ক সন্দর্ভ। আমি তখন শরৎচন্দ্রের হাতে কাগজটি দিয়া বলিলাম, ‘দেখুন দেখি এটা কি?’ তিনি উহা আমার হাত হইতে লইয়া একবার চোখ বুলাইয়া দেখিয়াই বলিলেন, ‘আরে, এই তো আমার অভিভাষণ। কোথায় গেলে?’ আমি হাসিতে হাসিতে সকল কথা বলিলাম। উপস্থিত সকলেই হাসিতে লাগিলেন, কিন্তু শরৎচন্দ্র কিছুমাত্র অপ্রতিভ হইলেন না।

ঐদিন ও পরের দুই দিন আমরা একত্রে ছিলাম। রাতে আহাৰাদির পর দুইজন দুই খাটে বসিতাম। শরৎচন্দ্র তামাক খাইতেন ও নানা বিষয়ে আলাপ করিতেন। রাত্রি দশটার সময় জ্যোৎস্নাপ্রাৰিত উন্মুক্ত প্রাক্ষণে একটি বড় গাছের গুঁড়ির উপর বসিয়া

নানা বিষয়ে কথাবার্তা হইত। পরবর্তীকালে শরৎচন্দ্র যখন আমার ঢাকার বাড়িতে আসেন, সে সময় আমার পুত্রঘাটে বসিয়া তাঁহার সহিত আমাব বহু আলোচনা হইয়াছে। সবস বাক্যলাপে শরৎচন্দ্রের অসাধারণ পটুতা এবং তাঁহার জ্ঞানের গভীরতা উপলব্ধি করিয়া বিস্মিত ও মুগ্ধ হইতাম। এ সম্বন্ধে অনাগ্র লিখিয়াছি, কেবল দুইটি কথাব পুনরাবৃত্তি করিব। তিনি আমাকে বলিয়াছিলেন যে অর্থাভাবের পরীক্ষার 'ফি' (fee) না দিতে পাবার তিনি এফ এ (Intermediate) পরীক্ষা দিতে পারেন নাই। আমার এই লেখা প্রকাশের পর তাঁহার ভাগলপুৰে আসিয়া ইহাব প্রতিবাদ করেন এবং ইহা লইয়া অনেক বাদানুবাদ হয়। আজ পর্যন্তও ইহাব সত্যাসত্য নির্ণয় করিতে পারি নাই।

শরৎচন্দ্রের আব একটি কথাব কতকটা পুনরাবৃত্তি করিব। ঢাকায় আমার বাড়ির পুত্রঘাটে রাগে তিনি, আমি ও আমার স্ত্রী বসিয়া তাঁহাব জীবনী ও উপন্যাস সম্বন্ধে অনেক কথা হইত। তাঁহার অনেক উক্তি মধ্য দুইটির উল্লেখ করিতেছি। প্রথমতঃ স্ত্রীজীবনের সত্য সম্বন্ধে অনেক আলোচনার পর তিনি বলিয়াছিলেন, 'আমবা মনে মনে এ বিষয়ে যে আদর্শ পোষণ করি বর্তমান সমাজেব সঙ্গে পরিচয় থাকলে বুঝতে পাববে তা কতটা ভুলো।' ইহা প্রতিপন্ন করিবার জন্য তিনি নামধাম সহকারে কয়েকটি কাহিনী বর্ণনা করিয়া বলিলেন, 'বাস্তব জগতে যে কিরণময়ীৰ অভাব নাই এগুলি তারই দৃষ্টান্ত।' এরপর আমার স্ত্রীকে সম্বোধন করিয়া আবেগভরে বলিলেন, 'দিদি, তোমাদের সম্বন্ধে কোন সমাজই কখনই সুবিচার করেনি। আমার উপন্যাসের মধ্য দিয়ে আমি জীবনভার তাই প্রতিবাদ করব।' এমনি আবও অনেক কথা বলিতেন—বলিতে বলিতে ভাবাবেগে উচ্ছ্বসিত হইতেন। এই প্রসঙ্গে একদিন গম্প করিয়াছিলেন যে বহু নাবীৰ গীবনকথা সংগ্রহ করিয়া তিনি একখানি বৃহৎ গ্রন্থ লিখিয়াছিলেন, কিন্তু তাহা পুড়িয়া নষ্ট হইয়া গিয়াছে।

কোন কোন সময় রাজনীতিক বিষয়ে আলোচনা হইত। এই প্রসঙ্গে তিনি গান্ধীজীব মুসলমান নীতির নিন্দা করিয়া অনেক কথা বলিতেন। নানাদিক ভাবিয়া আমি পূর্বে ইহাব উক্তি করিলেও বিশেষ কিছু বলি নাই। মুঙ্গীগঞ্জেব আলোচনা প্রসঙ্গে আমি ১৯৮৮ খ্রীষ্টাব্দে লিখিয়াছিলাম : "মহাত্মা গান্ধীৰ মতামত তিনি নির্ভীকভাবে প্রতিবাদ করেন। পূর্ণ স্বাধীনতাব স্বপক্ষে তিনি কংগ্রেসের বিরুদ্ধেও অনেক মন্তব্য করেন। এই সম্বন্ধে তাঁহাব কয়েকটি উক্তি আমাব নোটে লেখা আছে। কিন্তু বর্তমান পরিস্থিতিতে তাহাব উল্লেখ সমীচীন নয়।"

এখনও পরিস্থিতিব খুব পরিবর্তন হইয়াছে কিনা সন্দেহ। কিন্তু এ বিষয়ে নীরব থাকার আবও একটি কারণ ছিল। আমি লিখিয়াছিলাম : "যে বিষয়ে তিনি নিজের মতামত কোনদিন প্রকাশ্যে কিছু ব্যক্ত করিয়াছেন বলিয়া শুনি নাই, সে সম্বন্ধে বর্তমান অবস্থা বিবেচনা করিয়া কোন আলোচনা করা সম্ভব মনে করি নাই।"

কিন্তু আমাব জীবনের এই শেষ অবস্থায় দুই একটি কথা বলা সম্ভব মনে করি। তাই ঐতিহাসিক সত্যের মর্যাদা রক্ষার জন্য, হিন্দু-মুসলমানের মিলন সম্বন্ধে গান্ধীজীব মতেব তিনি যে খুব বিরোধী ছিলেন—এই সত্যটি প্রকাশ করা উচিত মনে করি। তাঁহার মন্তব্যটির সারমর্ম এই : 'মহাত্মার ধারণা ছিল যে হিন্দু-মুসলমানের মিলন না হইলে আমরা কখনও স্বাধীনতা বা স্বাভাবিক লাভ করিতে পারিব না। তিনি ও তাঁহার 'চেলার' ইহা পুনঃপুনঃ তারবার ঘোষণা করিতেছেন। ইহা প্রাগলমি ছাড়া আর কিছুই নহে। ইহার জন্য মহাত্মাব যে খিলাফৎ আন্দোলন, তাহার কোন যুক্তি নাই। তুরস্কের সহিত ভারতের কোন সম্বন্ধ নাই—হাজারে বা লাখে একটির বেশী হিন্দুর ঐ দেশ সম্বন্ধে কোন জ্ঞান নাই। সুতরাং হিন্দুর পক্ষে খিলাফৎ আন্দোলনের কোন অর্থ হয় না। ইহার উদ্দেশ্য শুধু ঘৃণা দিয়া ভারতের মুক্তি সংগ্রামে মুসলমানদের হাত করা।' হিন্দুর উপর মুসলমান রাজাদের অত্যাচার—বিশেষতঃ নারীধর্ষণ, মন্দির ও দেবমূর্তি ধ্বংসেব কথা বলিয়া তিনি বলিলেন যে, 'এই মনোবৃত্তি এখনও লোপ পায় নাই। খিলাফৎ আন্দোলন ও অন্যান্য প্রকারে মুসলমানদের সম্ভাব্যবিধান করিয়া তাহাদিগকে স্বরাজ লাভের আন্দোলনে যোগদান করাইবার প্রচেষ্টা বৃথা আশা মাত্র। হিন্দু-মুসলমানের মিলন বলিয়া চেঁচান যাইতে পারে, কিন্তু কোন ফল লাভের আশা নাই।'

শরৎচন্দ্র কংগ্রেসের একজন বিশিষ্ট কর্মী ছিলেন এবং মহাত্মা গান্ধীর প্রতিও তাঁহার যথেষ্ট ভক্তি ও শ্রদ্ধা ছিল। তথাপি গান্ধীজীব মতামতের বিরুদ্ধে এইরূপে তীব্র মন্তব্য শরৎচন্দ্রের অনন্যাসাধারণ ব্যক্তিত্বের পরিচয় বলিয়া মনে করি। বিশেষতঃ তিনি যখন এই সব কথা বলেন তখনও গান্ধীজীবই কংগ্রেস—এবং কংগ্রেসও গান্ধীজীব-মাত্র। শরৎচন্দ্রের এই চিন্তার স্বাধীনতা ও তাহা ব্যক্ত করিবার অকুণ্ঠতা তাঁহার চরিত্রের একটি বৈশিষ্ট্য।

শবৎসন্মকে ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হইতে ডি.লিট ডিগ্রী দেওয়া হয়। ইহাব পশ্চাতে যে ইতিহাস আছে আমি অন্যত্র তাহা ইঙ্গিত করিয়াছি। পরলোকগত কবিশেখর কালিদাস বাবু এ সম্বন্ধে যাহা লিখিয়াছেন তাহাব সারমর্ম এই : 'শবৎসন্ম বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের recognitionকে স্পৃহনীয় মনে করতেন। একদিন বলিছিলেন আপনার ডি.লিট পাওয়া উচিত।' তাহে তিনি বলেছিলেন 'বোধ হয় সাহিত্য সেবাব জন্য কোন উপাধি দেওয়ার প্রথাই নেই। সাহিত্য ছাড়া অন্যান্য বিষয়কে এটা recognise করবে।' আমি প্রতিবাদ করায় শবৎসন্ম বলেছেন, 'National University যখন হবে তখন তা দেশের মনীষীদের গোবর দান করবে। আমি আব তখন থাকব না তোমরা পাবে।'

অস্পর্শিত পাবেই ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় তাকে ডি.লিট উপাধিতে ভূষিত করলেন। ডঃ বমোশন্দ্র মজুমদার এম দু'বৎসব আগে আমাকে বলেছিলেন 'আমরা শবৎসন্মকে ডি.লিট দেবাব চেষ্টা করছি। কোন কোন পক্ষ হাতে আপত্তি হচ্ছে। সে আপত্তি কাটিয়ে উঠতে পারা যাবে বলে মনে হচ্ছে।'

এ সম্বন্ধে আমি অন্যত্র লিখিয়াছি :

"মুসলিম সাহিত্য সম্মেলনের কয়েক বছর পরে যাত্র ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় থেকে শবৎসন্মকে একটা অনাবারী ডিগ্রী ডি.লিট দেওয়া হয় আমি সেদুনা চেষ্টা করি। কলিকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় থেকে এইবুপ সম্মান দিলেই সেটা সুশাভন হত কিন্তু তা যখন হল না তখন অন্তঃ বাংলাব একটা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় যাতে তাব গণ্য উপযুক্ত সম্মান করে সেইজন্যই আমি এ বিষয়ে তপস্বী হয়েছিলাম। ব্যক্তিগত শ্রদ্ধা ও সৌজন্যব কথা ছেড়ে দিয়ে শবৎসন্ম সার্থিক প্রতিক্রিয়া সম্মানের জন্যই যে এবুপ ডিগ্রী দেওয়া উচিত ইহা আঙ্গ সকলেই একগাম্ভী স্বীকার করলেও সেদিন কথটা প্রমাণ করতে আমাকে কম বেগ পেতে হয় নাই। কিন্তু আজ সে সকল কথাব সনিস্তার আলোচনা অনাবশ্যক। ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে কত পক্ষ এই প্রস্তাব গ্রহণ করেন এবং এই উপলক্ষে কনভোকেশনের সময় শবৎসন্ম আবার ঢাকায় এলেন।"

এই প্রসঙ্গে বিস্তৃত আলোচনা কাবতে হইলে বসকজন লিখাত সার্থিকতাব সম্বন্ধে কিছু অপ্রীতিকর মন্তব্য করিতে হয়— সেইজন্যই আমি ইহা হইতে বিবৃত ছিলাম কাবণ, তাহাবা সকলেই আমাব বস্তুস্বামী ও শ্রদ্ধাভাজন। কিন্তু ঐতিহাসিক সত্যাব মর্যাদা বক্ষাব জন্য এ বিষয়ে সংক্ষিপ্ত বিবরণ দিওছি কাবণ আজ তাহাব কেহই বিবিত নাই।

শবৎসন্মকে ডি.লিট উপাধি দিবার জন্য আমি ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ব বিশিষ্ট কয়কজন শিক্ষকেব সহিত আলোচনা করি। কাবণ, এইবুপ প্রস্তাব প্রথমে শিক্ষকগণেব পরিষৎ (Academic Council) ও পরে কার্যনিবাহক সমিতিব (Executive Council) অনুমোদন সাপেক্ষ। শিক্ষকগণেব মধ্যে হিন্দু সংখ্যাই বেশী কিন্তু কার্যনিবাহক সমিতিতে হিন্দু ও মুসলমান সভাব সংখ্যা সমান তদুপরি দুই-তিনজন ইংরেজ সদস্য ছিলেন তাহাবা সাধারণতঃ মুসলমানদের পক্ষ সমর্থন করিতেন। আমার লিঙ্গাস ছিল হিন্দু শিক্ষকগণ শবৎসন্মকে ডিগ্রী দেওয়াব ব্যাপাবে পূবাপূবি সমর্থন করিবেন। কিন্তু দুই চারিজনেব সহিত আলোচনা করিয়াই বুঝিলাম একদলেব বিষম আপত্তি আছে। অনুসন্ধান করিয়া জানিলাম যে বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়েব বাংলা ভাষা ও সাহিত্য বিভাগেব শিক্ষকেবাই ইহাব প্রধান বিরোধী। তাহাবাই ইহাব বিবুদ্ধে ষড়যন্ত্র করিতেছেন এবং মুসলমানদেরকে দলে টানিবার চেষ্টায় আছেন। কাবণ বুঝিতে বিশেষ বিলয় হইল না। বাংলা বিভাগেব অধ্যাপক ডঃ সুশীল দে ও শিক্ষক মোহিতলাল মজুমদার কলিবাচাব 'শনিবাবেব চিঠি'ব দলেব (অর্থাৎ সজনীকান্ত দাস প্রভৃতিব) বিশেষ বন্ধু ও তাহাবা শবৎসন্মকে ডিগ্রী দেওয়া গড়ন্দ করেন না। শুনিয়াছি তাঁহাদের একটি প্রধান যুক্তি ছিল, কলিকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় শবৎসন্মকে ডি.লিট ডিগ্রী দেওয়াব উপযুক্ত মনে করবে নাই সুতরাং ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় এবুপ ডিগ্রী দিলে তাহাব মান খাটো হইবে। সুশীল দে আমাব বাংলাবন্ধু-জ্ঞান হইতে তাহাব সঙ্গে একত্রে পড়িয়াছি এবং ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে তাহাব অধ্যাপক পদে নিযোগে আমি কিছু সাহায্য করিয়াছিলাম (অবশ্য তাহাকে উপযুক্ত মনে করিয়াই করিয়াছিলাম বন্ধুত্ব খাতিবে নহে)। কিন্তু আমি কিছুতেই তাহাকে আমাব দলে টানিবার আনিতে পারিলাম না। এই সময় ইতিহাসেব শিক্ষক বহমান সাহেব (Sir A. F. Rahman) ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়েব ভাইস চ্যান্সেলার হইলেন। তিনি আমাব বিভাগেই Reader ছিলেন এবং তাহাব সহিত আমাব বিশেষ সম্পর্ক ছিল। আমি তাহাকে সকল কথা খুলিয়া বলিলাম। বলা বাহুল্য মুসলমান শিক্ষকগণেব উপর তাহাব যথেষ্ট প্রভাব ছিল। তিনি তাহা সনিত আলোচনা করিয়া আসিয়া আমাকে বলিলেন যে মুসলমান সদস্যেব শবৎসন্মকে ডি.লিট ডিগ্রী দেওয়াব আপত্তি করিবে না যদি সঙ্গে সঙ্গে একজন মুসলমানকেও এই

ডিগ্রী দেওয়া হয়। আমি রাজী হইয়া বলিলাম যে এই ডিগ্রীর উপযুক্ত মুসলমান কে আছেন, কারণ অনুপযুক্ত কোন লোককে ডিগ্রী দিলে আমাদের নিন্দা হইবে এবং শরৎচন্দ্রেরও সম্মান থাকিবে না। বাংলাদেশে এমন কোন ব্যক্তি পাওয়া গেল না। অবশেষে স্থির হইল যে কবি মুহম্মদ ইকবালকে এই ডিগ্রী দেওয়া হউক। মুসলমানেরা সম্মত হইলেন, শরৎচন্দ্রের বিরোধী দলও মুসলমান ভোট হারাইবার পর আর বেশী গোলমাল করিল না। স্থির হইল যে আমি শরৎচন্দ্র ও ইকবালের নাম একসঙ্গে প্রস্তাব করিব এবং এই প্রস্তাবটি ভোটে দেওয়া হইবে। সুতরাং এই প্রস্তাবে কোন আপত্তি হইল না, সর্বসম্মতিক্রমে ইহা পাস হইল।

শরৎচন্দ্রের উপর 'শনিবারের চিঠি'র দল ও এক শ্রেণীর বাংলা সাহিত্যিক কেন বিরূপ ছিলেন তাহা আমি জানিতে পারি নাই। শরৎচন্দ্র যাহাতে খুশি হইতেন সেই মতনীরোধের কথা জানিতে না পাবেন সেজন্য আমাকে খুবই বেগ পাইতে হইয়াছিল।

শরৎচন্দ্রের এই উপাধি পাওয়ায় কলিকাতার 'রসচক্র' নামক সাহিত্যিক প্রতিষ্ঠান তাঁহাকে বিপুল সম্বর্ধনা জানায়। এই উপলক্ষে তাহাণা একটি উদ্যান সম্মিলনীও বাবস্থা করে এবং শরৎচন্দ্রকে একটি অভিভাষণে সম্মানিত করা হয়। এই অভিভাষণের নিম্নলিখিত উক্তিটি বিশেষ তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ যে মনোভাব লইয়া আমি শরৎচন্দ্রকে ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হইতে সম্মানসূচক ডি.লিট উপাধি দিবার জন্য চেষ্টা করিয়াছিলাম তাহাটী ইহাতে প্রতিফলিত হইয়াছে : "আপনার সকলেই শনিয়াছেন গঙ্গাতীরের সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ কথাসম্পাদক বুদ্ধিগঙ্গাতীরের বিধ্বংসমাজ ডি.লিট উপাধি দ্বারা ভূষিত করিয়াছেন। যাহাণা সাহিত্যের খবর রাখেন, সাহিত্যের জন্ম-কোষ্ঠী রচনা করে, যাহাণা তাহাণ ঘটককারিকা ও কুলুজির ডাঙারী, যাহাণা সাহিত্যের ঘরসংসাবে তদারক করে এবং শেষ পর্যন্ত তাহাণ আলমদ্বারা সপিণ্ডীকরণ পর্যন্ত সমাপ্ত করে, আমাদের বিধ্বংসমাজ চিরকাল তাহাদেরই সম্মানিত করে—কিন্তু যাহাণা সাহিত্য সৃষ্টি করে তাহাদিগকে কোন সম্মান দেওয়া তাহার রীতিনীতি বিরুদ্ধ।

"ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় এই রীতি না মানিয়া প্রীতির বেশে যাহা করিয়া ফেলিল—তাহা ভারতবর্ষের সাহিত্যের ইতিহাসে ভাষ্য হইয়া থাকিবে।

"বিজ্ঞানের অধ্যাপকের চেয়ে বৈজ্ঞানিক, দর্শনের শিক্ষকের চেয়ে দার্শনিক ও ইতিহাসের ব্যাখ্যাতার চেয়ে ঐতিহাসিক ও প্রত্নতাত্ত্বিক যে বড়, এ দেশের বিধ্বংসমাজ একথা স্বীকার করিলেও সাহিত্যের অধ্যাপকের চেয়ে যে সাহিত্যপ্রস্তুতা ঢের বড় একথা স্বীকার করে না। এই কথা স্বীকার করাইতে হইলে সাহিত্যপ্রস্তুতকে মারিতে হয়—বাঁচিয়া থাকিয়া তাঁহার নমস্যা না বরণ্য হইবার উপায় নাই। আজ ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, যিনি খজ নহেন, অন্ধ নহেন, জরাজীর্ণ নহেন, হাসপাতালে শয্যাগত নহেন—এমন একজন সুস্থ সবল জীবন্ত জলন্ত সাহিত্যিককে মর্ধাদা দান করিয়া অসম্ভব সম্ভব করিল।"

"আজিকার এই উদ্যান-সম্মিলনে আমরা ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের প্রতি আন্তরিক কৃতজ্ঞতা ও আমাদের পরম ভক্তিবাজন শরৎচন্দ্রকে অভিনন্দন জ্ঞাপন করিতেছি।"

কয়েক বৎসর পূর্বে কলিকাতা বেতার কেন্দ্র বিভিন্ন বয়সের (ত্রিশ হইতে আশী) পাঁচজনকে শরৎচন্দ্র সম্বন্ধে আলোচনার জন্য আহ্বান করে। আমিই ছিলাম ইহাদের মধ্যে বয়োজ্যেষ্ঠ। যতদূর মনে পড়ে অন্যান্য কথার মধ্যে আমি বলিয়াছিলাম যে আজকাল 'কমিউনিষ্ট' লেখকগণ নিঃস্ব (Proletariat) অর্থাৎ যাহাদের 'স্ব' (কীয়) বলিতে কিছুই নাই তাহাদের সম্বন্ধে অনেক আলোচনা করেন। কিন্তু এই দল এবং তাহাদের গুরু কাল' মার্কসও নিঃস্ব বলিতে কেবল আর্থিক দারিদ্র্যের কথাই ভাবেন। শরৎচন্দ্র 'মহেশ', 'অভাগীর স্বর্গ' প্রভৃতি গল্পের মাধ্যমে এই সম্প্রদায়ের করুণ চিত্র অঙ্কিত করিয়াছেন। কিন্তু তিনি সাহিত্যের মাধ্যমে আরও একশ্রেণীর নিঃস্বের প্রতি আমাদের দৃষ্টি আকৃষ্ট করিয়াছেন। যে সমুদয় অভাগিনী নারী সামাজিক নীতি লঙ্ঘনের ফলে বা তাহার অপবাদে কেবল অর্থসম্পদ নহে, সামাজিক মানমর্ধাদা, আত্মীয়স্বজন—এ সকল হইতেও বঞ্চিত হইয়াছে, তাহাদের এই গভীরতর ও অধিকতর বেদনাবাজক নিঃস্বতার দিকে তিনি আমাদের মনে যে সহানুভূতি ও সমবেদনা জাগাইয়াছেন শরৎচন্দ্রের পূর্বে আর কোন বাঙ্গালী উপন্যাসিক তাহা করিয়াছেন বলিয়া আমার জানা নাই। আর সাধারণভাবে সমাজের, বিশেষতঃ পল্লীসমাজের যে বাস্তব চিত্র তিনি অঙ্কিত করিয়াছেন তাহারও তুলনা নাই। অস্পষ্টবয়স্ক দু-তিনজন সভা বলিলেন যে, এখন সমাজের এত বেশী পরিবর্তন হইয়াছে যে শরৎচন্দ্রের উপন্যাসে আর কোন বাস্তবতা নাই। সুতরাং তাহার সাহিত্যিক খ্যাতি ও প্রতিপত্তি অনেক হ্রাস পাইয়াছে। তাহার উপন্যাসগুলির বিক্রয় যে অনেক কমিয়াছে ইহাই তাহার প্রকৃষ্ট প্রমাণ। ইহার উত্তরে আমি বলিয়াছিলাম যে, যে যুগে ইংলণ্ডে শেক্সপিয়ারের খ্যাতি ও প্রতিপত্তি সর্ধাপেক্ষা বেশী হইয়াছিল, সে যুগের ইংরেজ সমাজ ও শেক্সপিয়ারের যুগের সমাজের মধ্যে প্রভেদ আরও গুরুতর ছিল। আমি বিশ্বাস

করি যে শেক্সপিয়ারের ন্যায় শরৎচন্দ্রের সাহিত্যিক চরিত্রসৃষ্টির অনবদ্য সৌন্দর্য চিরদিনই তাঁহাকে সাহিত্যক্ষেত্রে উচ্চ মর্যাদার অধিকারী করিবে।

এই আলোচনার কয়েকদিন পরে আমি আমার গ্রন্থের প্রকাশকে অনুরোধ করিয়াছিলাম শরৎচন্দ্রের উপন্যাসের বিক্রয় কমিয়াছে কিনা তাহার অনুসন্ধান করিতে। তিনি আমাকে জানাইয়াছিলেন যে শরৎচন্দ্রের উপন্যাসের বিক্রয় কিছুমাত্র হ্রাস পায় নাই।

অসুস্থ শরীরে বৃদ্ধবয়সে এই কয়টি কথা লিখিয়াই শরৎচন্দ্রের প্রতি আমার শ্রদ্ধার শেষ অর্থ্য নিবেদন করিলাম।



# Saratchandra Chattopadhyay

Ramesh Chandra Majumdar

I have been requested by the All Bengal Sarat Centenary Committee to write something on Saratchandra. I have completed eighty-eight years of life and am not in good health at the moment. I wish I could write as much as I like, but my health, I am afraid, will not permit it. I have already written three or four articles on Saratchandra. But then I could not say certain things about him for some particular reasons. Today I feel I should, even at the risk of being unpopular, leave them on record for the sake of historical truth. Before doing so, I, however, should begin with a story that throws light on some special traits of Saratchandra's character, even if it involves some repetition.

My acquaintance with Saratchandra was very slight until we met during the Munshiganj Session of the Bengali Literary Conference in 1332 B.S. (1925). He was the president of the literary section of this Conference, and I was the president of the history section. We were put up in a room in a hostel or a school building surrounded by vast fields. We talked for hours together very intimately.

A very funny incident happened on the very first day of the Conference. After lunch, the volunteers came to take us to the Conference, and we got ready, being properly dressed for the occasion. But all on a sudden we were faced with a difficulty. Saratchandra could not find the paper on which he had written his Presidential Address. His suitcase, his bed, and then his pockets were searched thoroughly, but in vain. He got impatient and said: 'Where can it be now? I was reading it only a few minutes ago while sitting on the bed.' Suddenly I remembered that he had been puffing at his *hukka* with his fingers wrapped in a roll of paper, probably to save them from the heat of the *hukka* or something else. I also remembered that he had crumpled and thrown it away after finishing his smoking. So I looked round and saw a crumpled roll of paper lying in the corner of the room, like the rolled papers used by shop keepers. I picked it up and found that there was something written on it in small letters and it seemed to be an essay on a literary subject. Then I handed it to him and said: 'Look at this, please.' He took it from my hand, ran his eyes over it, and then exclaimed: 'Oh dear, how did you get it? This is my written Address.' I told him all about it laughing all the time, and everyone present there laughed, too. But Saratchandra was not in the least perturbed.

We stayed together for three days. After dinner at night we used to sit on our beds. He smoked and talked on different subjects. Sometimes we went out and had our chats, sitting on a log of wood in the open moonlit field. After the Conference was over he came to my house in Dacca, and we again had our usual talks, while sitting on the brick benches in front of our bathing pond. I was always amazed at the depth of his knowledge and his extraordinary sense of humour. I have written about all this elsewhere; here I should like to repeat a thing or two. He told me that he had not been able to take the F.A. Examination as he could not pay the fees due to financial difficulties. When this was published, his relations at Bhagalpur denied it, and the whole thing sparked off a great controversy. Even to this day I have not been able to find out who was right.

I should like to repeat here another anecdote. Sitting on the brick benches facing the pond in the big compound of my house after dinner, he, my wife and I used to talk for hours about his life and works. I feel tempted to quote two of his comments. In the first place talking of the chastity of women, he said: 'If you are familiar with what is going on in our society, you will understand how false our ideals of womanhood are.' He then told the stories of several women without committing their names. 'These prove that there is no dearth of Kiraṇmayī in our society', he commented. After this he turned to my wife and said: '*Didi* (Sister) you women have never got your due in society. I am determined to protest against this through my novels as long as I live.' He went on like this and sometimes was visibly overwhelmed with emotion. In this connection he once told me that he had written a voluminous book based on the case histories of a large number of women. Unfortunately, it was destroyed by fire. Saratchandra was a very good talker. I have not come across a better one in my life.

From time to time our conversation touched on politics. He was quite often very critical of Gandhiji's Muslim policy. Though I have referred to this in my previous writings on Saratchandra, I have not said more than that for various reasons. I wrote as follows in 1948 about our conversation at Munshiganj: "He (Saratchandra) boldly protested against the views of Mahatma Gandhi. He also opposed the Congress and spoke in favour of total Independence. I have written down in my note book some of his comments. But it would not be wise to quote these in the present situation."

I am not sure if the situation is better today. But I had yet another reason to keep silent about this. I wrote: "In view of the present situation I have not thought it wise to discuss matters about which he was never known to have expressed himself in public." But now at the fag end of my life, I feel I should say a word or two about this. I think I should state emphatically the fact that Saratchandra was against Gandhi's view of Hindu-Muslim union 'at any cost'. His comments boil down to this. 'Mahatma thought that we would not be able to win Independence unless Hindus and Muslims were united. He and his followers have cried themselves hoarse to rub it in. It is nothing but madness. Mahatma's Khilafat movement does not make any sense. India has no affinity with Turkey; not more than one in a thousand or a million Hindus may be said to have some knowledge of that country. So Hindus have no reason to join the Khilafat movement. Its sole purpose is to bribe the Muslims into the Indian Independence movement.'

Talking of the oppression of Hindus by the Muslim monarchs—rapes of women, destruction of temples and idols, etc., Saratchandra said: 'The Muslims have not yet dropped this attitude. To seek the support of the Muslims for the Independence movement by placating them through Khilafat movement and in various other ways is to hope for something impossible. It is all very well to cry for the unity of Hindus and Muslims, but it will bear no fruit.'

Saratchandra was a very important member of the Congress and had great respect for Gandhi. Nevertheless, the way in which he expressed himself on Gandhi's views is a proof of the

strong personality he had, especially in view of the fact that the Congress then was Gandhi's Congress, and that the Congress was almost synonymous with Gandhi. Such independence of spirit and such courage to express it were two important features of his character.

The University of Dacca conferred the Degree of D. Litt. on Saratchandra. I have elsewhere referred to the history behind it. The late poet Kalidas Roy wrote as follows : "Saratchandra considered academic recognition as highly covetable. Once I said, 'You should be awarded a D. Litt.' He answered, 'Perhaps they have no convention to confer a title on a writer. They recognise everything except a writer.' When I protested, he said, 'When there will be a National University, I am sure, it will honour the writers of our country. I shall not live to see that, but you will get it.'"

Kalidas Roy continued :

"Within a few days Saratchandra was honoured with a D. Litt. by the Dacca University. Dr. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar had told me two years ago, 'We're trying to accord him a D. Litt. There have been objections in some quarters. It seems we shall be able to overcome all these difficulties.'"

As regards this I have written in another article as follows : "Within a few years of the Munshiganj Literary Conference, I made every effort so that the Dacca University would confer a D. Litt. on Saratchandra. It would have been more proper and fair if the Calcutta University was the first to do it. But the Calcutta University did nothing at the time. What I wanted was that a Bengali University would honour a Bengali writer. Although everybody admits today that Saratchandra deserved this degree for his literary genius (my personal respect for him is a different matter) I had immense difficulties in proving it. However, I feel, I need not go into details of this episode. It would suffice to say that the Dacca University accepted my proposal, and Saratchandra came to Dacca again on the occasion of the Convocation to receive the degree.

If I now discuss the whole thing in detail, I shall have to say some unpleasant things about some persons who were my friends and colleagues. That is why I did not mention them in my previous writings. But now I can venture a brief summary of the whole episode for the sake of historical truth without causing anybody any embarrassment—since none of them is alive today.

I discussed with some eminent professors of the Dacca University the matter of conferring a D. Litt. on Saratchandra. For, such a proposal needed the approval of the Academic Council and the Executive Council. The majority of the teachers were Hindus, but the Hindus and Muslims had equal representation in the Executive Council. In addition, there were two or three Englishmen who usually supported the Muslims. I believed that all the Hindu teachers would support the proposal of conferring a D. Litt. on Saratchandra. But after talking to some of them I gathered that one group had some reservations. After inquiry I came to know that it was the teachers in the Bengali Department who were against my proposal. In order to thwart it they had even tried to join hands with the Muslims. The reason was not far to seek. Dr. S. K. De, the Head of the Department of Bengali, and M. L. Majumder, a teacher in the same department, who was a distinguished writer in Bengali, were friends of the group known as 'Sanibarar Chithi' in Calcutta, and no wonder they would be against Saratchandra's being honoured by the D. Litt. Degree. Their main argument, so I heard, was that since the Calcutta University did not think Saratchandra fit enough for a D. Litt., the Dacca University would be lowered in public esteem by doing so. Dr. S. K. De was my friend since my boyhood days ; we read in the same class at the same school and college. I also helped him in a way to get the University appointment ( not a friendly favour, but a recognition of his merit ). But I

failed to win him over to my side in this dispute. At this time Dr. A. F. Rahman became the Vice-Chancellor of the Dacca University. He had been a Reader before that in my department. We were good friends, and I had a very frank talk with him about it. Needless to say, he had a great hold on the Muslim teachers. After talking to them he told me that they would not object to a D. Litt. for Saratchandra if a Muslim writer also was chosen for the same title. I agreed and wanted to know if there was any Muslim writer who deserved this degree, since honouring a man of lesser stature would be degrading both to the University and to Saratchandra. No such writer was found among the Muslims in Bengal. At last it was suggested that Muhammad Iqbal be chosen for this degree. The Muslim section of the staff agreed, and the opponents of Saratchandra did not give us much trouble as they knew they would not get the Muslim vote. It was decided that I should propose the names of Saratchandra and Iqbal together and then it would be put to vote. At last it was approved unanimously. I did not know why the group called 'Sanibarar Chithi' and a certain section of Bengali writers were so much against Saratchandra. But I had a trying time in hiding this fact from him.

A literary organisation 'Rasa-Chakra' gave Saratchandra a warm reception after he got the D. Litt. from the Dacca University. On this occasion they organised a garden party, and a congratulatory Address was given to him. The following extract from it is significant—it echoes the sentiment that lay behind my attempt to honour Saratchandra with the D. Litt. degree :

"You have all heard that the greatest of the novelists living on the bank of the Ganga has been honoured with a D. Litt. on the bank of the Buri Ganga... The academic circle honour only those people who are custodians of literary news and makers of the horoscope of literature, those who are marriage registrars and genealogists of the literary world and those who manage the domestic affairs and even perform the funeral rites of Literature ; but it is not their custom to honour those who are the creators of literature.

"What the Dacca University has done in violation of this convention and out of respect for creative art will go down as a glorious deed in the history of Indian literature.

"Our academics admit that the scientist is more venerable than the professor of science, that the philosopher and the historian are more important persons than the professors of philosophy and history, but they refuse to accept the fact that the creative writer counts for much more than the professor of literature. The writer must die if he wants them to realise it. He has no chance to be considered as worthy of academic recognition as long as he lives. Today by honouring someone who is not lame, or blind, or on his deathbed at hospital, but beaming with vitality and vigour, the Dacca University has made possible what was impossible. At this garden party today we congratulate our respected writer Saratchandra and express our heartfelt gratitude to the Dacca University."

A few years ago the Calcutta Radio Station invited five persons of different age groups (from thirty to eighty) to speak on Saratchandra. I was the oldest of them. So far as I can remember, I said, among other things : "Much has been said by communist writers about the proletariat, i.e., have-nots. But this group and their guru, Marx, think of economic poverty as the only hall-mark of the have-nots. Saratchandra has portrayed a touching portrait of this class in his stories like *Mahēś* and *Abhāgīr Swarga*. But he has also drawn our attention to another class of have-nots—the social proletariat. They are the unlucky women who have been deprived not merely of their economic assets but also of all kinds of social prestige and position and have been discarded by their near relations, on account of even slight transgression of social laws. I don't know of any other Bengali novelist who has evoked, before Saratchandra, our sympathy for those who have lost everything of value in life. Besides, his realistic portrayal of the village society has not been surpassed.

Some young members of the group said : 'The society since Saratchandra has changed so much that his novels fail to impress us by their realism. So his importance and fame as a writer have declined to a great extent. The fall in the sale of his novels is a proof of the fact.' In reply to this I said 'The social difference between the age in which Shakespeare's fame was at its height and the age in which he wrote was more striking. I do believe that, as in the case of Shakespeare, it is for the unspeakable beauty of characterisation and some permanent elements in human character that Saratchandra will always be held in high regard in our literature.'

After this discussion I asked my publisher to inquire if the sale of Saratchandra's books had dropped. He informed me that there had been no change, and Saratchandra's novels were still the best sellers.

With these words, at my age and in my present state of health, let me pay my last homage to Saratchandra.

*Translated by Dipendu Chakrabarti*

# শ্রীশরৎচন্দ্র

শ্রীদিলীপ কুমার রায়

মানুষকে মূলতঃ দুটি প্রধান ভাগে ভাগ করা যায় : এক, যারা জগতকে দেখেন হৃদয়ের দৃষ্টি দিয়ে ; আর এক, যারা জগতকে দেখেন মনের বা বিচারের দৃষ্টি দিয়ে। রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও স্বিকেন্দ্রলালের মধ্যে এই দুটি ভঙ্গির সমন্বয় দেখতে পাই, অর্থাৎ কবি ও মনীষীর বিচার ও মূল্যায়ন। অতুলপ্রসাদ ও শরৎচন্দ্রের মধ্যে দেখি। হৃদয়ের দৃষ্টিই ফুটেছে, অতুলপ্রসাদের—গানে, শরৎচন্দ্রের—মানবপ্রপঞ্চে। শরৎচন্দ্র আমাদের প্রায়ই বলতেন একটি কথা : দীন হীন পাপীতাপীকেও দুরাশ্রয় বলতে নেই যেহেতু তার মধ্যে প্রচ্ছন্ন আছেন সেই মহাত্মা যিনি “সদা জনানাং হৃদয়ে সন্নিবিষ্টঃ” ( উপনিষৎ )। গীতায় ঠাকুর কথাটি আরো ফলিয়ে বসেছেন :

অপি চেৎ সুদুরাচারো ভজতে মাম্ অন্যান্যভাক্ ।

সাম্বরেব স মন্তব্যঃ সমাক্ ব্যবসিতো হি সঃ ॥

ক্ষিপ্ৰং ভবতি ধৰ্ম্মাত্মা শশ্বৎ শান্তিং নিগচ্ছতি ।

অর্থাৎ দুরাচারও কৃষ্ণকাস্ত হ'লে সাধুর পদবী লাভ ক'রে রাতারাতি শাস্ত্রত শান্তিলাভ করতে পারে। শরৎচন্দ্রের নানা চরিত্রেই ভালো ও মন্দের সহাবস্থান (coexistence) দেখতে পাই—লক্ষ্মীছাড়ার মধ্যেও প্রেমিককে, নীচের মধ্যেও দরদীকে, অসতীর মধ্যেও সতীকে। অর্থাৎ তাঁর অপব্রূপ মানবচরিত্র প্রদর্শনীর মধ্যে দেখতে পাই এক আশ্চর্য সমন্বয় আলোর ও কালের, ভালোর ও মন্দের। এ-স্বপ্ন-পারিসর্য তপ'র্গে এ-চমকপ্রদ সত্যটিকে ফলিয়ে তোলা সম্ভব নয়, কিন্তু দরদী ও ভুয়োদর্শী সমালোচকেরা সবাই মুগ্ধ হয়েছেন এ-অসাধাসাধনের পরিচয় পেয়ে। পঞ্চাশ বৎসর আগে শরৎচন্দ্র আমার প্রথম উপন্যাস ‘মনের পরশ’ প'ড়ে আমাকে লিখেছিলেন : “‘মনের পরশ’-এর শেষের একটি বড় সুন্দর। বৃকের দরদ দিয়ে যে সংসারকে দেখতে শিখেছে তার লেখার মধ্যে কত আনন্দ কত বেদনা ফুটে ওঠে। তোমার এ-বইটিতে তার পরিচয় মেলে। (‘মনের পরশ’-এর দ্বিতীয় সংস্করণের নাম করা হয়েছে ‘ভাবি এক হয় আর’।)”

“বৃকের দরদ” শরৎচন্দ্রের নিজের ভাষা—যার রসে তিনি অজস্র সাহিত্যরাসিকের হৃদয় রসিয়ে তুলতেন। আমি এ-সত্যটির মনোজ্ঞ পরিচয় পাই যখন তাঁর সঙ্গে ঘেঁষে বৃন্দাবন যাই। নানা ষেঁষনে একের পর এক কুৎসিত ও ঘেয়ো কুকুরকে তিনি ব্লুটি ছুড়ে ছুড়ে দিতেন। আমি জিজ্ঞাসা করলে তিনি বলেছিলেন : ‘আহা, ওদের খাওয়া ছাড়া আর কোন্ আনন্দ আছে বলো তো : মন খুশী হয় নিঃশব্দে দিয়ে। যার সম্বলের অভাব নেই তাকে দান ক'রে সে-আনন্দ মেলে কি ?’ শরৎচন্দ্রের মহত্তম উপন্যাস ‘শ্রীকান্ত’ আমাদের মন টানে বিশেষ করে এই জনোই : তাঁর ‘ফুরান অনুকম্পার চৈতন্যসম্পদে বইটির দৃশ্যের পর দৃশ্য ঝিকিয়ে উঠেছে যেন ক্যালিডোঙ্কোপের মতনই নিত্যনব বিন্যাসে ! কতদিন আগে পড়েছি তো, কিন্তু আজো মনেব পটে জল জল করছে

তাঁৰ সোনার তুলিতে আঁকা সেই কঙ্কালসার কুকুৰটোৱে ছবি। আশ্চৰ্য, একটা সৰ্বহাৰ কুকুৰ ওৱা মৃত অমৰ্যাদীৰ জীৱ পড়ন্ত কুটিবটি পাহাৰা দিছে হঠাৎ শ্ৰীকান্তেৰ চোখে পড়ল এ কী ভাবে? “বুকেৰ দৰদ” আৰু কাৰ নাম?

ফুলকাটা বাঙাপাড়েৰ সেলাই কৰা বগলশ এখনো তাঁৰ গলাষ। নিঃসন্তান ৰমণীৰ একান্ত মেহেৰ ধন কুকুৰটা একাকী এই পৰিত্যক্ত কুটিবৰ মধো কী খাইয়া যে আজও বাঁচিয়া আছে ভাবিয়া পাইলোম না। পাড়ায় ঢুকিয়া কাড়িয়া কাড়িয়া খাওয়ার ইহাব জোৰও নাই অভাও নাই—অনশনে অৰ্ধাশনে এ-বেচাৰা বোধহয় তাহাবই পথ চাহিয়া আছে যে তাহাকে একদিন ভালবাসিত। হয়ও ভাবে, কোথাও না কোথাও গিয়ছে একদিন ফিৰিয়া আসিবেই। মনে মনে বলিলাম, এ-ই কি এমনি? এ-প্ৰত্যাশা নিঃশেষে মুহিয়া ফেলা সংসাবে এভই কি সহজ?

পড়তে পড়তে চোখেৰ জলে অক্ষৰ ঝাপসা হয়ে গেছে বাবাবই আৰু প্ৰণাম কৰিছ সে-অপবৃণ চিত্ৰীকে যিনি দু-চাৰটি মাত্ৰ আঁচেড়ে এমন প্ৰেমৰ ছবি ফুটিয়ে তুলতে পাবলৈন অথচ (হায় বে সমালোচক!) কত বিজ্ঞ বেদবদীৰ মুখেই শুনৈছি শবৎচন্দ্ৰ আমাদেব সাহিত্যে দুনি তব সম্বন্ধন কৰেছেন পাপেৰ ওকালতি কৰে।

বহু আঁম ‘কোনোদিনই বুঝতে পাবিনি এই সব নীতিধ্বজকে যাঁৰা সংসাৰেৰ নানা উল্টোপাল্টা টানকে গাজোয়াৰী ঢঙে নাকচ কৰে অভয়া অগ্নিৰ নিদিব বাজলক্ষ্মীৰ, দেবদাসেৰ আৰো অনেক দুৰ্ভাগ্যৰ চৰিত্ৰৰ ব্যথাৰ দিকটাব কথা ভাবেন না, বুঝে পাবেন না বহুদিনেৰ হাবাবা : মানুষেৰ বিচাৰাসনে এসতে যেয়ো না যে কখনো পাপ কৰিনি কেবল সে-ই যেন পাপীতাপীকে কলঙ্কী বলে দোষ দিত চয়। শবৎচন্দ্ৰ চাইভেন না এভাবে সমাজপতি হয়ে এসতে কাৰণ তিনি জানতেন মানুষ কত দুৰ্বল, অসহায় কত সহজে বিপদ পা দিয়ে ভুল কৰে বসে। আজো আমাৰ কানে বাজে তাঁৰ একটি প্ৰায়োক্তি : ‘মণ্ট, মানুষকে অপমান কৰতে নেই।’ আমাৰ হোমনীয়া বন্ধু সত্যেন বোস দু-তিনিটি চিঠিতে আমাকে লিখেছিলে—মুখেও বৰ্ণেছিলে : ভাই আমাৰ কেউই শব্দেৰ ব্ৰহ্মচাৰী নই যে পাপী তাপীকে হেয় বলে অভিশাপ দিতে পাঁব।

আঁমি বলছি না দুৰ্ভাগ্যৰ সম্বন্ধন কৰাৰ নাম শুভশুঁকি। কেবল এই কথাটি ভুলে চলে না (যে কথা শবৎচন্দ্ৰ বলতেন প্ৰায়ই) যে মানুষকে কলঙ্কী বলে দেগে দেওয়াৰ ‘শট কাট’ নিষ্কলঙ্ক হবাব ৰাজপথ নয়, দৰদী না হ’লে না টেলে সাজানো যায় সমাজকে, না ভুলে ধৰা যায় কোনো বড় আদৰ্শকে। এমন কথা কেউ বলেনা যে অনেক সুবিধাবাদী ‘পৰ্গোজাফিৰ’ দিকে ঝোঁকেন না কলঙ্কে মনোহৰ বঙে বঙিয়ে তুলে আন্তাকুডেৰ ছবি একে সন্তায় কিস্তিমাং কৰতে। বড় সাহিত্যিক হ’তে হলে সব আগে চাই সেই গভীৰ দৃষ্টি অৰ্জন কৰা যে চলতি নৈতিকতাৰ অসাবতাব মৰ্মভেদ কৰতে সক্ষম ব’লেই পাৱে দুবাচাবেৰ মধোও সদাশয়েৰ দেখা পেতে। বুদ্ধিৰ আদালতে শধু বাবচ্ছদ বিপ্লৱণ ক’ৰে কাজী’ নাম কেনা যেতে পাবে, কিন্তু কবি ঋষি দ্ৰষ্টা চিত্ৰী হ’তে হ’লে সৰ্বাগ্ৰে চাই মৃন্ময় নেত্ৰে প্ৰেমৰ চিহ্নৰ দীপ জ্বালাবাব প্ৰতিভা। শবৎচন্দ্ৰ বহু ক্ষেত্ৰেই চমক্কেৰ বাযকে নামজ্বৰ কৰে তাঁৰ স্বৰ্ণদৃষ্টিপ্ৰদীপেৰ আলো জ্বালিয়ে আমাদেব চমকে দিয়েছেন মহন্তৰ সত্যেন প্ৰজ্ঞাৰ আবিৰ্ভাবৰে—বহুবিচাৰী বাস্তববাদেৰ (বিশ্বালিসম্-এৰ) দৃষ্টিতে যাব সন্ধান মেপেনা। স্বৰ্ণদৃষ্টি বস্তুতাত্ত্বিকদেৰ ভুল হয় এইখানেই তাঁৰা দেখতে পান না (শ্ৰীঅৰবিন্দেৰ ভাষায়) ‘Nothing here is utterly what it seems : তথ্যে চৰ্মক্কে যা দেখা যায় তাৰ এজাহাবে শিবনেত্ৰেৰ বাযকে বাঁওল কণাব আসল নাম ভ্ৰান্তিবিলাস। তাই উপানন্দেৰ যত্ৰেত্ৰ পৰম সত্যেৰ পাঠ দেওয়া হসেছে প্যাৰাডক্সৰ স্ববিবোধী উক্তিৰ গভীৰ ঝঙ্কাৰে : তদ্ এজতি তয়েজতি। তিনি সচল অথচ অচল। দৰে অথচ কাছে আকাৰ অথচ নিবান্ধাৰ নিগুণ অথচ সগুণ ইত্যাদি।

দৰ্শনেৰ অন্তৰাণা কৰতে বৈদিক paradox-এৰ প্ৰসঙ্গ তুলিনি। তুলৈছি এই জনো যে সত্যেৰ নানা স্তৰ আছে ব’লে গভীৰ সত্যকে ভাষায় প্ৰকাশ কৰতে হলে অনেক সময়ই প্যাৰাডক্সেৰ আশ্ৰয় না নিলে চলে না। সাহিত্যে এ প্যাৰাডক্সেৰ দেখা মেলে নানা চৰিত্ৰৰ বা ঘটনাৰ পৰস্পৰবিবোধী উচ্ছলনেৰ মাধ্যমে : অশ্রুৰ মধো শান্তি, অন্ধকাৰেৰ কেন্দ্ৰে আলো, বেদনাৰ অনন্দমহলে পৰমানন্দেৰ বৃক্ষী। উদাহৰণতঃ শবৎচন্দ্ৰেৰ চন্দ্ৰনাথ গম্পটি—অনাৰ্যীয় বৃদ্ধেৰ কী নিটোল প্ৰাণল্পশী বাৎসল্য। দেবদাসে’ চন্দ্ৰমুখী—পতিতাব মধো প্ৰেমিকা। মনে পড়ে অতুলপ্ৰসাদেৰ এ-টুটি গম্প প’ড়ে মাথুনেত্ৰে বলা : আহা দিলীপ চোখে জল বাখা যায় না তাঁৰ প্ৰেমৰ চিত্ৰে।

সত্য কথা, শবৎচন্দ্ৰেৰ ‘বিন্দুৰ ছেলে’ ও ‘বামেৰ সুমতি’ অনুবাদ কৰতে ব’সে কতবাবই যে চোখ মুৰ্ছৈছি। ‘বামেৰ সুমতি’-তে নাৰায়ণীৰ মাতৃমূৰ্তি। ‘বৈকুণ্ঠেৰ উইলে’ গোকুলেৰ ভ্ৰাতৃমেহ। বঙ্গমণ্ডে এটি দেখে সতিহই চোখেৰ জলে দৃশ্য ঝাপসা

হ'য়ে গিয়েছিল। 'শ্রীকান্ত'র অন্নদা দিদি। পিয়াৰী বাইজীৰ নৰ্ত্তকী হওয়া সত্ত্বেও গভীৰ প্ৰেমে ফুটে ওঠা। বিজলী-ৰ অভব্য ইয়াৰ্কিৰ পৰেও এসে নবজাতককে আশীৰ্বাদ ক'বে তাৰ কষ্টহাৰ দান কৰা। 'আধাৰে আলো' গল্পে এ-কাহিনীটি প'ড়ে শুধু যে চমক লাগে তাই নহ, মন ভিজে ওঠে, এনে পড়ে বাববাব এই মহাপ্ৰাণ মানুহটিৰ পতিতাদেব প্ৰতিও গভীৰ অনুকম্পাৰ কথা। তিনি তাঁৰ নানা গল্পে কতবাবই বলেছেন যে নাবীৰ সবচেয়ে বড় গৌৰৱ সতীত্ব নহ, মনুষ্যত্ব। 'দেবদাস'-এ চন্দ্ৰসুখীৰ বেদনাৰ অপবৃণ চিত্ৰণে কাৰ না মন অভিভূত হয়? দেবদাসেৰ অধঃপতনেৰ পৰেও তাৰ ক্ষুদ্ৰ মহৎ ক্ৰদয়েৰ ছবি কি মৰ্মস্পৰ্শী তুলিতেই না এ'কেছেন শৰৎচন্দ্ৰ! তিনি আমাকে একদিন বলেছিলেন: 'মন্টু, আমাৰ নিত্য সাথী ছিল বাবা যখন ভাবি তখন অন্যাক হই সত্যি। বান্দী, সাপুড়ে, বাউড়ুলে, যত সব বাপে-ভাডানে মায়ে-খেদানে ছেলেদেব দল। তাদেব মধ্যে কেউ মদ খেয়ে মবেছে, কেউ জেলে গেছে, কেউ বা গুণ্ডাদেব দলে ভিড়েছে। এদেব সঙ্গে থেকেও আমি কেমন কবে কোনো সভ্যতাব্যতাব ধাবপাশ দিয়ে না গিয়েও হ'য়ে উঠলাম যা হয়েছি।'

আমি তাঁকে একবার বলেছিলাম: 'আপনার কথা শুনে শ্রীঅৰবিন্দেৰ দৃষ্টান্ত মনে পড়ে। তাৰও পৰিপ্ৰেক্ষা আশেৰাষ ছিল কী জানেনই তো। যোজ্ঞা আনা তিৰ্য্যাক সাহেব সভ্যতা। ভাৰতৰ সনাতন সংস্কৃতিৰ ছোয়াচও নাগেনি তাৰ মনে প্ৰাণে। বাইশ বৎসৰ বয়সে তিনি যখন ইংলণ্ড থেকে দেশে ফেৰেন তখন একটিও ভাৰতীয় ভাষা জানতেন না- নিতৌন সাহেব- ইঙ্গবঙ্গ। অথচ তিনি হ'য়ে উঠলেন কী বলুন তো: দেশভক্তদেব মুকুটমণি, বিদ্রোহীণী নেতা, বেদেৰ ভাষাৰ, সংস্কৃত দিগগজ পণ্ডিত। লীলাময়েৰ লীলা কে বুঝবে বলুন। একটি ইংৰাজী চতুৰ্দশী মনে পড়ে পিতৃদেব প্ৰায়ই উক্ত কৰতেন:

There is so much good in the worst of us  
And so much bad in the best of us  
That it hardly becomes any of us  
To talk about the rest of us.'

মন্দমতি বালি যাদেব তাদেব অন্তৰেও  
লুকিয়ে যখন সুমতিয়া থাকে,  
সুমতিদেব মায়েও থাকে লুকিয়ে মন্দমতি,  
নিন্দা তখন কবব বলা কাকে।

শৰৎচন্দ্ৰ হেঁসে বসতেন: এবখাল পাঠ দেওয়া শক্তি নয় মন্টু। কিন্তু ব্যাপাৰটা বী তানো আমাদেব প্ৰত্যেকেৰ মধ্যেই দুটি মানুহ সদাযুগমান: বাচাবক ও দবদী। এ ওব সঙ্গে না ল'ভেই পাবেনা কেননা 'দেব দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি পতন্ত্ৰ' তুমি একবাৰ শ্রীঅৰবিন্দেব একটি চিঠি পাঠিয়েছিলে বড চমৎকাৰ। তিনি লিখেছিলেন, মানুহ তাব বদেব অন্য ততঃ দায়িক নয় সতটা দায়িক তাদেব মনে কৰেন নীতিবাদী ওপন্যাসিক ও নাট্যকাৰেৰ দল (Human beings are less deliberate and responsible for their acts than the moralists, novelists and dramatists make them — *Among the Great* p. 303)। একমারী উণ্টোপান্টা স্ৰোতেৰ বোগফলে মনুষ্য উৰাব হয় এদিকে 'বে সোদন্দ-বেদ ও কি ভাগে ভাবতেও ধান লাগে। তাই আমি সব আগে চাই নীতিধৰ্ম আচাৰ্য হতে নয় মানুহেৰ বাখান।' তাই হ'য়ে এদিশ পেতে কাব কথাও ওপাবি না। তবে এ আমাৰ বোন মনগড়া দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি নয়। আমি পতিতাদেব মধ্যও দেখেছি শব্দত মন্ত্ৰ না আঁতৰনাৰ উদাবতা ঠিক মোন উণ্টোনিৰে দেখেছি সুভদ্ৰদেব মধোও জঘন্য নোচতা বা অকম্পনীয় ক্ষুদ্ৰণ। দেখেছেন আমি অনেক সময়েই তাই হ'য়ে গিয়েছি মন্টু, কিন্তু মনুষ্য স্বৰূপ কী তান কোনো পৰিপাটি স্বেপা স্ত্ৰই আত্ম পবন্ত গড়ে তুলতে পার্বান।

কথাগুলি আমি নিজেৰ ভাষায়ই গুঁড়িয়ে বললাম বটে কিন্তু তাৰে দিয়ে নিয়ে নিই নি যা তিনি আদৌ বলতে চান নি। বস্তুতঃ তাব কাছে প্ৰায়ই চমকে চমকে উঠতাম শুনে তাব নানা উণ্টোপান্টা অভিজ্ঞতা শুধু কালেব সঙ্গে সাদাৰ খুশখুশালে ধবনয়া কৰাব নয়, পদে পদে 'ভাবি এক হয় আব-এব দুবস্ত এজাহাৰ-কখন যে কোন লিচিৰ ঝোঁক আমাদেব চানায় বুঝতে ইহমিশন খেয়ে। শৰৎচন্দ্ৰকে অনেক নীতিবাগীশ ও ধৰ্মধৰ্ম ভুল বুঝতেন এই জ. ঠ — শৰৎচন্দ্ৰেৰ জীবনদৰ্শন তাদেব সভ্যতাৰ নীতিপাঠকে নাকচ ব'ত বলে। গেটে, টলষ্টয়, ডষ্টয়েভস্কি টুর্গেনিভ সমসৈ'চ মম, প্ৰমুখ ভাবুক শিল্পীবাও এই পাঠই দিয়েছেন তাদেব নানা গাৰনভাষো।



কিন্তু এসব অসঙ্গতিব কথা আমাদের দেশে শ্রেষ্ঠ সাহিত্যে এখন পর্যন্ত ঠাই পায় নি। তাই আমবা সাহিত্যী, চন্দ্রমুখী, বিজলী, অভয়া, দেবদাস, সুবোধ প্রমুখ নাট্যকলায়িতার আচরণকে বুঝতে না পেরে শব্দচন্দ্রকে অপমান করেছি 'চরিত্রহীনের উকিল' নাম দিয়ে। সুবোধ বিষয় যুগ বদলাচ্ছে বলে আমবা ক্রমশঃ তাঁর প্রেমদৃষ্টির মহত্বকে মানদান করতে শিখেছি, তাই এখন আব তেমন তারপরে বিলাপ করি না তিনি সুনীতিব মানহানি করেছেন বলে।

আমাব কিছু মেয়েগণও অতীত লাগত ভাবতে যে শব্দচন্দ্রকে অনেক দূর্বৃত্ত নীতিবাদী কেন দোষ দিতেন, বলতেন তিনি গহিত চাণচলনের ছবি আঁকতেই ভালবাসতেন। মাতুলের প্রাণের ও শিশুচরিত্রের নানা অপবৃপ ছবিই কি ফুটে ওঠে নি তাঁর লেখায়। অন্যদিকে সম্প্রদায়ের মাঝে কি তাঁর নানা চিত্র আঁকেন নি তিনি মনোবিশেষে, গভীর হৃদয়বেগকে তিনি বলাবলই এর নানা গল্প বর্ণনা করেছেন বলাবলই বসে শ্রীঅর্বিন্দ যাব নামকরণ করেছিলেন psychic love আশ্রয় প্রেম। এই সূত্রে আমি বাক্যটি কথা গুলি চাই শব্দচন্দ্রের সাহিত্যিক স্নেহ-প্রেমপ্রীতির সম্পর্কে আবার এইজন্য যে, প্রেম সত্যকে শ্রীঅর্বিন্দ যা দেখেছিলেন আমবা সমাধাণত তা দেখতে পাই না।

শ্রীঅর্বিন্দ এর পরিভাষায় প্রেমপ্রীতিকে মোটামুটি তিনটি স্তরে ভাগ করেছেন তিনটি নাম দিয়ে। এক, physical বা ভৌতিক দই mental বা প্রাণিক তিন psychic বা আশ্রয় স্তরের। বলাই বেশি যে এ ত্রয়ীর মধ্যে সবচেয়ে গভীর ও স্থায়ী ভূমি দেখে সাহিত্যিক বস। শ্রীঅর্বিন্দ শব্দচন্দ্র স্নেহ-প্রেমপ্রীতি চিত্রকে তুলে সাধুবাদ দিতেন এদের প্রেরণা আসত সাহিত্যিক হৃদয় তেবে বসে। শব্দচন্দ্রের নানা চিঠিই আমি তাকে পাঠাতাম। শেষ চিঠির তারিখ ৩ মাঘ ১৩৫১। শব্দচন্দ্র নিঃস্বপ্নিতেন ( আমি তখন তাঁর নিষ্কৃতি' গল্পটির অনুবাদ মশগুল ) :

প্রথম কলাগীষ মণ্ড

তোমাব চিঠিগুলি পেলাম। একটা একটা করে জবাব দিই।

- (১) তোমাব ও নিশিকান্তের ছবি বেশ উঠেছে। বহুকাল পরে তোমাব মুখ আবার দেখতে পেলাম। বড় আনন্দ হ'ল। একবার সত্যিকার দেখতে ইচ্ছা করে। কিন্তু আশা ছেড়ে দিয়েছি ভেবেছি এ-জীবনে আব হ'ল না। নাই হোক।
- (২) টাইপরাইটারটা যে ভালভাবে পৌঁছেছে এতে বড় ভূমি। তোমাব যে পছন্দ হয়েছে এর চেয়ে আনন্দ আমাব নেই। যে লোক নিজের সমস্ত দিয়েছে তাকে দেওয়া তো দেওয়া নয়, পাওয়া। আমি অনেক পেলাম। তোমাব চেয়ে ঢেঁবে বেশি।
- (৩) শ্রীঅর্বিন্দের হাতেব লেখা চিঠিটুকু সত্যে বেখে দিলাম। এ একটি বড়।
- (৪) নিষ্কৃতি'-কে ভালো অনুবাদ কবাব জন্যে ভূমি যে যথাসাধ্য কববে সে আমি জানতাম। শুধু আমাকে ভালোবাসো বলেই নয়, যা বা যথার্থই সাধুব ও গ্রহণ কবেন এ তাদের স্বভাব। এ না কবে তাবা থাকতে পাবে না। হয় কবে না, কিন্তু কবলে ফাঁকি দিতে জানে না।
- (৫) অনুবাদ ভালো হ'লেই যখন দেখে দেবাব সংকল্প করেছেন শ্রীঅর্বিন্দ নিজে। 'ভূমি যদি' শ্রীকান্ত' প্রকাশ কবতে পাববে তখনই শুধু আশা কবব হয়ত বাঙালি একজন গল্পলেখককে পশ্চিমের ওবা একটু প্রজ্ঞাব চোখে দেখবে। তোমার উদ্যোগ এবং শ্রীঅর্বিন্দের আশীর্বাদ থাকলে এ-অসম্ভব হয়ত একদিন সম্ভব হবে। এই ভবসাই করি।
- (৬) অনুবাদের ব্যাপারে তোমাব স্বাধীনতা আমি সম্পূর্ণ স্বীকার কবে নিয়েছি। তাব কারণ, ভূমি তো শুধু অনুবাদক নও, নিজেও বড় লেখক। তোমাকে অকিঞ্চিৎকর সপ্রমাণ করাব লোক বিবল নয়, এ-চেঁটাও তাদের আছে, অথবাসাধ্যও অপরিণামী। তা হোক, তাদের সমবেত চেঁটাব চেঁটেও অনেক বড় তোমাব প্রতিভা এবং একাগ্র সাধনা। তাছাড়া তোমাব গুবু শূভাকাঙ্ক্ষা তো সমস্ত কিছুব পিছনে রইলই। জগতে তাদের অপচেঁটাটাই সফল হবে, হবে না তোমাব অন্তরের জাগ্রত শক্তি? এমন হতেই পাবে না মণ্ড।
- (৭) শেষকালে বইলো তোমাব কথা। তোমাব কাছে আমি সভাই বড় কৃতজ্ঞ মণ্ড। এর বেশি আব কী বলব? চিঠি লেখাব ব্যাপারটা চিরকালই আমাব কাছে জটিল। যেন কিছুতেই গুছিয়ে লিখতে পারিনে। তাই যেসব কথা বলা আমার উচিত ছিল অথচ বলা হ'ল না সে আমার অক্ষমতার জন্যে, অনিচ্ছার জন্যে কখনো নয়।

শ্রীঅরবিন্দের নববর্ষের প্রার্থনা সত্যিই বড় চমৎকার লাগল। সত্যিই খুব বড় কবি তিনি। শ্রুভাষী শ্রীশবচন্দ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায়।

এ-চিঠিটি আমি শ্রীঅরবিন্দকে পাঠাই এক তর্ক তুলে যে, মানুষের প্রাণশক্তি লীলাই (elan vital) জীবনের মূলকে সরস রেখেছে, বসন্তকে বিন্দন বেখেছে। গুবুদের যাকে সাহীকক প্রেবণা বলেন সে বড় বেশী গুবুগভী প্রায়ই আমাদের গাছে তুলে দিয়ে মই পেড়ে নেয়। আগা অনেক বিজ্ঞানী ওকার্লোও কপোছিলাম প্রাণলীলাব সনাতন ধারার স্বপক্ষে নানা বিলিতি বুকনি জুড়ে দিয়ে। শ্রীঅরবিন্দ আমায় এই সব ভাবিক কুসৃত্তি উত্তরে লেখেন মৃদু হেসে :

"Sarat Chatterji's letter is not a glory of the vital at all, even though it may have come through the vital but not from it. If I were asked how does the psychic work in the human being, I could very well point to the letter and say 'like that'. The psychic is the soul, the divine spark animating matter and life and mind and as it grows it takes form and expresses itself through these three touching them to beauty and fineness it worked even before humanity in the lower creation leading it up towards the human, in humanity it works more freely though still under a mass of ignorance and weakness and coarseness and hardness leading it up towards the Divine. In Yoga it becomes conscious of its aim and turns inward to the Divine. It sees behind and above it—that is the difference."

(ভাবার্থ : "শবচন্দ্রের চিঠিটির অর্থমা ওর প্রয়োজনপ্রায় নয় কারণ যদিও প্রাণশক্তির মাধ্যমেই এর একটাটি ফুটেছে, কিন্তু প্রাণশক্তি ওর মূল প্রেবণা নয়। এর প্রাতি ভগ্নে অন্তবায়ন। শ্রীঅরবিন্দ অন্তরে psychic being এর অনুবাদ করা হয়েছে চেতা পুস্তক। কিন্তু এ শব্দটি এখনো বাংলা ভাষায় চল হয়নি বলে আমি psychic being এর তর্জমা করছি অন্তবায়ন অন্তঃশক্তিবর্গীয় প্রতিশব্দে।) আলো উপরে পড়েছে। যদি আমাকে বেড় জিজ্ঞাসা কবে মানুষের মধ্যে এই আলো কিভাবে সক্রিয় হয়, তাহলে আমি অকুণ্ঠেই বলব : চিত্র এ চিঠিটিই মতন। এই অন্তবায়নই হ'ল আমাদের আসল সত্তা, বস্তু প্রাণ মনকে সেই জীবন্ত করে তোলে আর এদের মাধ্যমে নিজেকে প্রকাশ কবে লাভণ্য ও সৌকর্যের আশ্রয়। মানুষের চেয়ে নিম্নস্তরের জৈবজগতেও ওর শক্তি সক্রিয় হয়ে এসেছে বটে—জীবকে ধীরে ধীরে মানবতাব পর্ধ্যায় এগিয়ে দিতে, বেনল মানুষের মধ্যে এ শক্তি বেশী অব্যাহতভাবে স্ফুর্বিত হয়ে থাকে—যদিও বহু অজ্ঞান, দোর্বল, কর্কশতা ও কাঠিন্যের দোষা ঠেলে ওবে। যোগের ভূমিকায় এ-অন্তঃশক্তি তার লক্ষ্য সন্ধানে সচল হয়ে উঠবে। তাহলে ভগবৎমুখী হয়—দেখতে পায় যা কিছু তাব পিছনে ছিল বা সম্বন্ধে পূর্ণিমা বিকাশের অপেক্ষা কবছে।")

অতঃপর আর একটি দীর্ঘপত্রে শ্রীঅরবিন্দ আমাকে গৃহিয়ে লিখেছিলেন প্রীতিপ্রেমস্নেহের লজ্জা অন্তবায়ন কিভাবে নিজেকে জানান দিয়ে থাকে ও কোথায়-কোথায় ব্যাহত হয়। চিঠিটি *Sri Aurobindo's Letters*, v, 2-এ ছাপা হয়েছে Friendship and psychic love অধ্যায়ে। তাই আমি এখানে শূণ্য সংক্ষেপে তাঁর ভাবার্থটি পেশ কবব যতটা সহজ ভাষায় পারি। তিনি লিখেছেন : "শূণ্য প্রাণশক্তি একাকারই ঘনিষ্ঠতাব তাম্পর্শ আসীন আর অন্তবায়ন হ'ল তাপহীন শিখারীন দ্যুতি এমন কথা মনে কবলে ভুল হবে। আসন্ন প্রীতিপ্রেমের শিখা ও তাপ প্রাণকে ছাড়িয়ে যেতে পারে বৈকি, কেবল সে হ'ল অমল শিখা, গিলোল নয়—তাই অম্ল এম খোবাক নে জোগায় না। আসন্ন প্রেম সচবাচব মানবিক আদান-প্রদানে পূর্বোপরি সক্রিয় হ'লে পাবেনা মানবিক স্বভাবের অঙ্গনে তাব পূর্ণ আবির্ভাবও হয়না—তাব লীলাখেলা পূর্ণস্ত হয় যখন তার জ্যোতি ও আনন্দ হয় ভগবৎমুখী। মানবিক স্তরে তাব নিবিড় আনন্দ আত্মপ্রকাশ কবে কালভদ্রে, উঁক দেখ চাকিত চমকে। কিন্তু তা সত্ত্বেও যে প্রেম মূলত প্রাণিক সেখানেও সেই জোগায় উপরিতব সব উপাদান : সব সূক্ষ্মতব মাধুর্য কোমলতা বিশ্বস্ততা আত্মদান আত্মবিলদান আত্মার সঙ্গে আত্মাব আত্মীয়তাব আদিগঙ্গেরী সেই বটে।"

ব্যাখ্যাটা সবল ও সহজ কবতে চেয়েও কেমন যেন গুবুগভী হ'য়ে গেল। কিন্তু তবু আশা কবি এ-ভাষ্যের মূল প্রতিপদ্যটি ধারা যোগ্যবৎ নন তাঁদের কাছেও দুর্দোষ হবেনা যেহেতু অকৃত্রিম হৃদয়বেশ কী বস্তু সবাই জানেন। যেমন শবচন্দ্রের নানা গম্প পড়তে পড়তে মনে হয়ই হয় যে তাঁর প্রেমপ্রীতি, স্নেহের প্রেষ্ঠ চিঠি অন্তবায়নই স্বপ বস ছন্দ প্রভা ফুটেছে ছটে ছটে, তাই তাঁর নানা মামূল নীতিবাদের বিরুদ্ধে বিদ্রোহ ঘোষণার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে মানবিক সামাজিক স্থিতিবাদকে ছাপিয়ে নিটোল হয়ে ফুটেছে

সাইকিক উজ্জ্বলন। যারা প্রেমপ্রীতিতেই সযত্নে গভীর কথা শুনতে চান-মামুলি উজ্জ্বলের সস্তা কুহুধ্বনি নয়—তারা অনেক সময়েই প্রথম দিকে ঘা খেলেও পবে স্বীকার কবেছেন সত্যতঃ যে, শবৎচন্দ্র আমাদের সাহিত্যে প্রেমের এমন এক বিচিত্র স্বাক্ষরের আমদানি করেছেন যে-স্বাক্ষর তাঁর আগে কোনো বড় বাঙালি সাহিত্যিকের রাগমালায় স্থান পায়নি। একটিমাত্র উদাহরণ দিই। তাঁর সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ উপন্যাস ‘শ্রীকান্ত’-এ নানা চরিত্রের মধ্যে দিয়েই তিনি গতানুগতিকতার বিবুদ্ধে বিদ্রোহ ঘোষণা করেছেন অশঙ্ক মৃদঙ্গের বলিষ্ঠ সঙ্গতে। এদের মধ্যে একটি আশ্চর্য চরিত্র অভয়া। যে অকুতোভয়ে প্রেমোন্মত্ত হৃদয়ের সাক্ষাৎ নামঞ্জুর করেছিল চলিত নৈতিকতার হীনতাকে। বলেছিল : ‘একদিন আমাকে দিয়ে বিয়েব মন্তব্য বলিয়ে নেওয়া হয়েছিল—সেই বলিয়ে নেওয়াটাই কি আমার জীবনে একমাত্র সত্য, আর সমস্তই এর-বাবেই মিথ্যা? এত বড় অনায্য এত বড় নিষ্ঠুর অত্যাচার কিছুই আমার পক্ষে একেবারে কিছু না? আন-আমান পরীক্ষার অধিকার নেই, মা হবার অধিকার নেই সমাজ সংসার আনন্দ কিছুতেই আর আমার কিছুমাত্র অধিকার নেই। একজন নারীকে মিথ্যানারী কদাচাবী স্বামী বিনা দেখে তাব স্বীকৃতি ত্যাগ করে দিল বলেই কি তাব সমস্ত নারীর ব্যর্থ পঙ্গু হওয়া চাই? এই জন্যই কি ভাবান মেয়েমানুষ গড়ে তাকে পৃথিবীতে পাঠিয়েছিলেন?’

নারীগোষ্ঠী প্রতি তাব শ্রদ্ধা ছিল গভীর। তিনি প্রায়ই বলতেন আমাকে : ‘এ-সংসারের ধারণশক্তি ও পরিচালনায় শক্তি এই বৎসকুলে নিজেই যে মেয়েদের জন্ম একথা পুরুষেরা প্রায়ই দেখতে পায় না বলেই আমরা বলে থাকি যে মেয়েরা অবলা, ভয়ভীরু, কাগাসস্থল। কিন্তু মানবসমাজে বলের সব চেয়ে গভীর পরিচয় মেলে কোথায়? সহনশক্তিতে। তাই কথায় বলে যে সয় সেই বল। মেয়েরা সংসারের দিনের পর দিন ঘা খাওয়া সত্ত্বেও যে হার মানেনা, একি চোখে না পড়ে পাবে, তোমার মুখেই শুনছি তন্ত্বেও মেয়েদের বলা হয়েছে পুরুষের শক্তি। (শক্তিজ্ঞানং বিনা দেব! মুক্তির্হাস্যায় কম্পতে শক্তিকে না জানলে মুক্তি হয়ে দাঁড়ায় হাসিব কথা) যুবোপেব খাস সাহেবরা আমাদের পদানশীনাগের প্রায়ই নাম দিয়ে থাকেন পুরুষদের বাদী। কিন্তু এই যদি আমাদের মেয়েদের যথার্থ স্বরূপ হ’ত তাহ’লে সংসারের বৎসক কবে ভেঙেচুরে অচল হ’ত। আমরা যে চলি সে কার উপর ভর কবে শূনি? মহাভারতেও গৃহিনীকেই কি গৃহ বলা হয়নি?’ তিনি প্রায়ই বলতেন যে, সাহিত্যে তাঁর প্রতিষ্ঠার ভিত্তি মেয়েদের সমর্থন।

আমি সায় দিয়ে বলতাম : ‘স্বামী বিবেকানন্দও আপনার দৃষ্টিভঙ্গীর সঙ্গে সায় দিতেন, বলতেন কথায় কথায় যে মেয়েরা গৃহের দীপ্তি, শোভা, স্তম্ভ। আমি আপনার লেখায় নানা নারী চরিত্রের ধারণশক্তি দেখে যে কী গভীর আনন্দ পেয়েছি কি বলব? আমার এইজন্য আরো দুঃখ হয় যে আমার বন্ধু অমুক তাঁর নানা লেখায় মেয়েদের নগণ্য বলে হাস্যহাসি করেছেন।’ উত্তরে শবৎচন্দ্র আমাকে লিখেছিলেন ভীষণ ভাষায় : ‘অমুককে তুমি ভালোবাসো। তোমার ভালোবাসায় পাছে ঘা লাগে এজন্য আমার মনে যথেষ্ট সন্দেহ এবং সংশয় আছে। তবু মনে হয় ভিতরের কথাটা কতকটা তোমার জন্য দরকার। কে নাকি লিখেছেন যে সাহিত্য সৃষ্টির অন্তর্ভালে যে স্রষ্টা থাকে, ছোট হ’লে সৃষ্টিটাও তার বড় হ’তে বাধ্যতাপায়। (রোম’র বোল’র একটি প্রায়োগ—আর্মিই শবৎচন্দ্রের কাছে একাধিকবার উদ্ধৃত করেছিলাম রোল’র বীতভবনের জীবনী থেকে।) এই কথা আমিও বিশ্বাস করি। এসব উদাহরণ নিম্নপ্রয়োজন, লিখতেও লজ্জাবোধ হয়, কিন্তু যাবা নির্বিচাবে স্বীকারিতার গ্লানি প্রচাৰ করাটাকেই রিয়ালিস্ম ভাবে, তাদের আর্টিক্যালিস্ম তো নেই-ই, রিয়ালিস্মও নেই, আছে শুধু অভিনয় ও মিথ্যা স্পর্ধা—না-জানার অহমিকা। মেয়েদের বিরুদ্ধে কোঁদল করার প্রণীতি থেকে কখনো সাহিত্য সৃষ্টি হয় না। আমার অন্তরের মেহ জেনো। ইতি। ৫ই জ্যৈষ্ঠ, ১৩৫০।’

শবৎচন্দ্র তাঁর নানা গল্পেই বলেছেন মেয়েদের রকমারি গুণ, লাবণ্য ও প্রতিভার কথা। তাঁর অঙ্গদাদিদি, নিশ্বেশ্বরী, কমা, অভয়া, বাজলক্ষ্মী, চন্দ্রমুখী, বিজলী, ঘোড়শী, কমললতা আরো নানা চরিত্রেই তিনি একেছেন মেয়েদের নানা চিত্তচমৎকার ছবি। কিন্তু সবচেয়ে বেশী দীপ্ত হ’য়ে উঠেছে তাদের অনমনীয় চরিত্রশক্তি কথায়। বিশেষ করে মাতুলস্নেহের অঙ্কনে তাঁর প্রতিভা হ’য়ে উঠেছে শিখরচাষী, দীপ্যমান। ‘শ্রীকান্ত’র এক জায়গায় তিনি লিখেছেন : ‘বৈরাগী হব কেমন কবে, যখন পথে ঘাটে চলতে ফিরতে মা-বোনকে দেখা পাই?’ বলতে কি, তাঁর পুরুষ চরিত্রেও যেন ছোপ লেগেছে নারীর অপরাধের সর্বসঙ্গী শক্তির। যে-সময়ে তিনি তাঁর অঘটনঘটনপটীয়সী প্রতিভার ঝলকে সবাইকে চমকে দিয়েছিলেন সে-সময়ে মেয়েরা পদানশীনাই ছিল। (রবীন্দ্রনাথ শবৎচন্দ্রের জন্মদিন—৩১ ভাদ্র ১৩০৯—লিখেছিলেন : ‘সম্প্রতি সাংসারিক বিশেষ দুর্ভোগ না থাকলে আমি নিশ্চয়ই তোমার অভিনন্দন সভায় যোগ দিতুম। ... তোমার প্রতিভার দ্বারা তুমি দেশের হৃদয়কে জয় করেচ, দেশের গভীর অন্তরে তোমার প্রবেশাধিকার।

তোমার লেখনী বাঙালীর চিত্ততন্তুকে হাসি ও অশ্রুর নবতর বাজনার অভিব্যক্তি করে তুলেছে। যেখানে তার মনোমন্ডিরে চিরন্তনের পূণ্যবেদিকা সেইখানে তোমার জীবনের শ্রেষ্ঠ অর্ঘ্যপ্রদীপ বাংলা সাহিত্যের জ্যোতির্গণিত্য দীর্ঘ আয়ুঃ সঞ্চার করবার জন্যে প্রতিষ্ঠিত থাকবে।) আমাকে তিনি প্রায়ই বলতেন : 'মণ্টু, ওদেশে নরনারীর বঙ্গমণ্ডলের কত বিভাব, কত পাদপ্রদীপ, গম্পের প্লটের কী নিরন্তর বৈচিত্র্য.....জাহাজ, খনি, হোটেল, সানিটোরিয়াম, বিশ্বভ্রমণ আরো কত রকম পরিবেশে কত রকমের নরনারী এসে হাত মেলাচ্ছে, নানা আড্ডেভেগারে কাঁধ মেলাচ্ছে কত রকমের অভাবনীয় বথ টানতে, কিন্তু আমাদের দেশে এ-স্বাধীনতার অবকাশ কোথায় ?' সেই চিরকেলে খোড় বাড়ি খাড়া, খাড়া বাড়ি খোড় ! রোমান্সের পাখা এখানে কত দুর্বল, প্রেমলীলার বৈচিত্র্য কত কম বলো দেখি। ওদের পটভূমিকার বিশালতার পাশে আমাদের আটপোরে গায়ে হলুদ, ফুলশয্যার শাঁখ, আলো, বাঁশ, ফুলফুরাব উৎসব ধরো দেখি ! তাহলে বুঝবে আমাকে এদেশে রোমান্সের নাটালীলা সৃষ্টি করতে কেন এত বেগ পেতে হয়েছে।'

আমি নিজের ভাষায়ই ফলিয়ে তুললাম তিনি নানা সময়ে যে-খন্দ প্রকাশ করতেন আমাদের হৃদয়দৃষ্টি নীতিবাদী ত্রিটিকদের আঁচিয়ে। কিন্তু বলে না, it is a bad workman who finds fault with his tools ' তাই শরৎচন্দ্র কোণঠেসা হয়েও রোমান্সের নানা অচিন্তনীয় পাল তুলে চলতে চেয়েছিলেন অসম্ভবকে সম্ভব করে, বিশেষ করে মেয়েদের অন্তঃসলিলা দীপ্তিব কাছে হাত পেতে। আমবা যখন তাঁর পুত্র চব্বিশের সঙ্গে নারীচরিত্র তুলনা করতে তখন দেখতাম তাঁর নানা নারীচরিত্রের অঙ্কন নৈপুণ্যেই তিনি সবচেয়ে গভীর বৃন্দভাব পরিচয় দিয়েছিলেন বেদন্যা ও অশ্রুব মেঘে আনন্দ ও হাসির ইন্দ্রধনু ফুটিয়ে। রবীন্দ্রনাথও তাঁর এই কৃতিত্বের অকুণ্ঠ প্রশংসা করতেন। মনে পড়ে শ্রীপ্রমথ চৌধুরী তাঁর বাড়িতে একবার মহোৎসব করেন রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও শরৎচন্দ্রকে পাশাপাশি বসিয়ে। আমি সে অবিস্মরণীয় সভার একটি সভাসদ ছিলাম। মন আমার গান গেয়ে উঠেছিল এ-দুই দিকপাল বৃন্দভাবের সংলাপ শুনতে শুনতে। রবীন্দ্রনাথের একটি কথা আজও মনে পড়ে। তিনি বলেছিলেন : 'শরৎ, তুমি আমাদের বঙ্গসমাজকে দেখেছ অন্দরমহলে ঢুকে। আমি দেখেছি বাইরে থেকে উঁকি মেরে। না, সত্যিই তাই। কারণ আমরা যে ছিলাম একধরে। তাই তুমি বঙ্গসমাজের অনেক কিছু দেখেছ যার নাগাল আমি পাই নি।' বলে উল্লেখ করেছিলেন বোড়শী ভৈরবীর ও 'পল্লীসমাজ'-এর।

কিন্তু এক জায়গায় বাণীর এ-দুই বরপুত্রের গভীর মিল ছিল : উভয়েই নারীকে বরণ করেছিলেন প্রেমের প্রকার আনন্দলোকে তথা দীপ্তশিব বৃন্দমণ্ডে। মনে পড়ে আমার কিশোর মনে কী উজ্জ্বল জেগে উঠত 'গোরা'র রবীন্দ্রনাথের আনন্দময়ীর কথা পড়তে পড়তে যার মধ্যে উদার দীপ্তি মাদুর্য এই গ্রিবেণীর সঙ্গম স্তম্ভিত হয়ে উঠেছিল।

পরে এঁদের মধ্যে যখন নানা কারণে ভুলবোঝার দরুণ মনান্তর হয় তখন আমার কী যে দুঃখ হ'ত ! আমি চেয়েছিলাম আমার ক্ষুদ্র সাধ্যমত এঁদের উভয়কে ফের পদস্পর্শের কাছে টেনে আনতে। রবীন্দ্রনাথকে লিখেছিলাম আমার 'নিষ্কৃতি' অনুবাদের কথা, ঐসঙ্গে তাঁকে জানিয়ে দিয়ে যে সখ্য শ্রীঅরবিন্দ আমার অনুবাদটির পুনর্মার্জন করতে রাজী হয়েছেন। রবীন্দ্রনাথ আমার অনুরোধে তৎক্ষণাৎ শরৎচন্দ্রের সাহিত্যপ্রতিভা সম্বন্ধে ইংবাজীতে একটি প্রশংসিত লিখে পাঠান। (এ-প্রাক্কথনটি ছাপা হয় *Deliverance* অনুবাদের প্রথমে। তাতে শেষে ছিল : "He has imparted a new power to our language.....and achieved the best reward of a novelist : he has completely won the hearts of Bengali readers....." March, 1935.- "আমাদের ভাষায় তিনি এক অভিনব শক্তি সঞ্চার করেছেন.....কথাসাহিত্যিকের সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ পুরস্কারও পেয়েছেন—বাংলার পাঠকপাঠিকার হৃদয় অধিকার করেছেন।")

কিন্তু শ্রেয়ান্দি নৃত্যবিদ্যানী-শ্রেয়ের পথে নৃত্য বাধা। শরৎচন্দ্র খুশী হয়ে আমার সঙ্গে শান্তিনিকেতনে যাবেন সব স্থির, কিন্তু সব ভেসে গেল—তাঁর যাওয়া হ'ল না। রবীন্দ্রনাথ আমাকে লিখলেন দুঃখ করে : 'আমি জানতাম শরৎ আসবে না।' শরৎচন্দ্র আমাকে লিখলেন : 'রবীন্দ্রনাথ আমার প্রতি প্রসন্ন নন। তাঁর ঋণ আমি কোনো কালেই শোধ করতে পারব না। সাহিত্যসেবার কাজে তিনি আমার গুরুকম্প। ...কিন্তু ভগ্না বাদ সাধলো।' এ কী বিড়ম্বনা ! নিয়তিঃ কেন বাধতে ?

কিন্তু খতিয়ে এ সব মতান্তর মনান্তরই সাময়িক, স্মরণীয় তথা তথা সভা এই যে, রবীন্দ্রনাথ শরৎচন্দ্রের প্রতিভার মর্মস্পর্ক ছিলেন, আর শরৎচন্দ্রও সত্যিই রবীন্দ্রনাথকে ভক্তি করতেন, যেম শিষ্য করে গুরুকে। রবীন্দ্রনাথের মুখেও বারবারই শুনছি যে, এই-ই গুণগ্রাহী মানুষের সঙ্গে মানুষের আত্মিক সম্বন্ধ, বাকি সব ক্ষণায়ু মায়ী—আসতেও যেমন যেতেও তেমন।

শরৎচন্দ্র রবীন্দ্রনাথকে কী গভীর ভক্তি করতেন তাব একটি দৃষ্টান্ত দিই। একদা দু-তিনজন রবীন্দ্রবিমুখ শরৎচন্দ্রকে বলেছিলেন : 'আপনাব লেখা আমরা সবাই বুঝতে পারি, কিন্তু রবীন্দ্রনাথ কী যে মাথামুত্থ লেখেন বুঝতে পারি না।' শরৎচন্দ্র পিঠ পিঠ জবাব দেন : 'ঠিক বলেছ, কারণ তিনি লেখেন আমাদের জন্যে, আব আমি লিখি তোমাদের জন্যে।' কী চমৎকার ধ্যান্ডা !

শরৎচন্দ্রের গুণাবলি সব স্বন্ধে অনেক কিছু লিখেছি, কিছু ফোটাতে পারিনি তাঁর মেহোৎসুক মনটির কথা যার চুষকশক্তি তে তিনি বাংলায় অগণন নবনাবীকে কাছে টেনেছিলেন তাঁর মেহকোমল হৃদয়টির সহজ টানে। আমি নিজের তাঁর কাছে একটানা কী মধুর মেহ পেসে এসেছিলাম বৎসবের পব বৎসর, তাঁর কথা কিছু বলি ইতি করবাব আগে। তিনি একটি চিঠিতে লিখেছিলেন (আমাব 'স্মৃতিচারণ ২য় ভাগ') :

"তাবপব একদিন শুনলাম তুমি সব ছেড়ে বৈরিগি হ'য়ে গেছ। হঠাৎ মনে হয়েছিল আমার নিজের যেন একটা মস্ত লোকসান হয়ে গেল। এ জীবনে তোমাকে আব দেখতেই পাবোনা এ কি মনে করো আমাদের সোজা দুঃখ ? কাতিক ১৩৩৮।"

"পণ্ডিতাব আশ্রম খাবাব পব থেকে তোমার স্বন্ধে এই বস্তুটা আমি বড় আনন্দের সঙ্গে লক্ষ্য ক'রে আসছি যে, ওখানে থেকে তোমাব পড়াশুনা হয়েছে যেমন ব্যাপক সুদৃবপ্রসারী, তেমনি হয়েছে গভীর অন্তর্মুখী। এবং হয়েছে সত্য কেন না তোমার জ্ঞান ও পাণ্ডিত্য যেমন বিনয়ী তেমনি শান্ত। এই দিক থেকে তোমাকে যতই পরীক্ষা ক'রে দেখি ততই মুগ্ধ হই, ততই এই ভেবে খুশী হই যে, তুমি আমাব দলে, তোমাব আব ভয় নেই, এখন থেকে তোমার সত্যকার ভদ্রতা তোমাকে নিচে নামা থেকে রক্ষা ক'বে যাবে। জৈষ্ঠ ১৩৮০।"

"...তোমার বসন্ত মনের পরিচয় ছেলেবেলাতেই তোমার সঙ্গীতে, তোমার গুণিজনের প্রতি ঐকান্তিক অনুরাগে, তোমার নানা কাজেই আমি পেয়েছিলাম। তোমার প্রতি মেহও আমার তাই অকৃত্রিম, কোনো বাইরের ষাতপ্রতিষাতই মলিন হবার নয়। তোমার লেখাব স্বন্ধে যে শুভ কামনা বহুদিন পূর্বে করেছিলাম আজ তা সফল হ'তে চললো এ আমার বড় আনন্দ। আবাব আশীর্বাদ করি তুমি সার্থক হও। মাঘ ১৩৮২।"

তাঁব একটি কামনা ছিল, প্রায়ই বলতেন—আমার সঙ্গে একবার ওদেশে যাবেন, বিশেষ ক'রে মহামনীষী বার্টাও রাসেলকে দেখতে। একটি দীর্ঘ পত্রে লিখেছিলেন :

"মন্ট্, যে ব্যারিস্টার হয়ে আসে নি সে ভালোই হয়েছে। ...ও এই যে দেশে দেশে ঘুরে বেড়ায়, অনেক জাত, অনেক সমাজ, অনেক লোকের সঙ্গে বাংলাদেশের একটা মেহ ও প্রকার বান্ধন বেঁধে দিচ্ছে। ওকে সবাই চেনে, সবাই ভালবাসে, ওর সঙ্গে গেলে কোথাও আদরের অভাব ঘটবে না। কিন্তু সে-আশা সে-আনন্দে আজ ছাই পড়ল। ফাল্গুন ১৩৩৭।"

একটি গানে আমি লিখেছি :

'ভালোবাসি' বলা সহজ কঠিন শুধু ভালবাসা। আমি অনেক বিদেশী গানের সুর বাংলা গানে বাসিয়ে শরৎচন্দ্রকে শোনাতাম। এটি তাদের মধ্যে একটি। আমার 'সুবাঞ্জলি' পরিলিপিতে গানটি আছে। তাই এখানে উদ্ধৃত করছি শুধু ছয়টি লাইন :

'ভালবাসি' বলা সহজ, কঠিন শুধু ভালোবাসা।

একটু রঙিন উজ্জ্বল হায় কাব মেটে গভীর পিপাসা ?...

মায়ের প্রীতি অহৈতুকী,

শিশুর সুখেই মা যে সুখী,

চায় হ'তে তাই অকুলমুখী আমার গানের ছন্দ ভাষা।

খাঁচার পাখী স্বপ্ন দেখে নীলাশ্বরে বাঁধবে বাসা।

শরৎচন্দ্র দুটি দীক্ষার মস্ত্র সিদ্ধিলাভ করেছিলেন : শিল্পে উদার ও সুন্দরকে মান দিয়ে, আর সমাজে মানুষকে ভালোবেসে। প্রণাম তাঁকে :

দেখেছ তুমি দর্শনীয়ে প্রণাম করি' সুনরে,

সাক্ষা নভে চন্দ্রে বেসে ভালো।

দরদী তুমি, শিল্পী তুমি, চিরপ্রেমিক অন্তরে,

আখারে হার মানো নি বরি' কালো।

এবার খামবার সময় এল। শরৎচন্দ্রের মতন বিচিত্র মহনীয় শিল্পীর কাছে কত কী পেয়েছি সব বলব কেমন ক'রে? না, ঋণ শোধ করতে নয়। কারণ, কোনো মহৎ ঋণই ভার নয়, সম্পদ। আজ আশির কোঠায় এসে মনে পড়ে শরৎচন্দ্রের অগাধ স্নেহের কথা, নানা বিচিত্র চিন্তা-উদ্দীপক মস্তব্যের কথা, সর্বোপরি তাঁর প্রজ্ঞাপ্রবণ হৃদয়ের কথা, যিনি বাইরে নাস্তিক হ'য়েও অন্তরে ছিলেন আন্তরিকদের শিরোমণি। ঠাকুর গীতায় অকারণ বলেন নি : “প্রজ্ঞাবান্ লভতে জ্ঞানম্।” মনে পড়ে ১৯৩৭ সালে ৮ই অগষ্ট তারিখে তাঁর সঙ্গে শেষ দেখার কথা। আমি দু-তিনমাসের জন্যে কলকাতায় এসেছিলাম যত্ন তত্ত্ব গান গাইতে। তাই শরৎচন্দ্রের সঙ্গে বেশী দেখা হয়নি। ১৫ই আগষ্ট গুরুদেব শ্রীঅরবিন্দের জন্মোৎসব। দেখা করতে গেলাম শরৎচন্দ্রের আনন্দ নিলয়ে।

তিনি বললেন গভীর স্নেহে : ‘এসো এসো মণ্টু ! এবার বেশী দেখা হ'ল না। আর হবে কি না কে জানে?’ কিছু তোমার গুরুদেবের জন্মোৎসব, তুমি অনগ্র থাকবে কেমন ক'রে? তাই যাও। কেবল ভুলো না আমাদের, আর তাঁকে আমার প্রণাম দিও।’

আমি বললাম : ‘প্রণাম?’

শরৎচন্দ্র (হেসে) : ‘একটু আশ্চর্য লাগছে, না। শোনো মণ্টু। আমি যোগবাগ মন্তু তন্তু বুঝি না। কেবল একটি কথা মানি—যে প্রণাম করতে শেখেনি সে পাবার মতন কিছুই পায় না।’

তাঁকে চোখের জলে প্রণাম জানিয়ে চলে এলাম। আর দেখা হয়নি তাঁর সঙ্গে। সার্বাধীন কেবল একটি উদ্‌ গানের ধূয়া বেজে উঠছিল আমার বুকের বীণায় :

তোমায় প্রণাম করতে হৃদয় চায়,

মরণকে জীবন দেব না, দেব তোমার পায়।

# Sri Saratchandra

Sri Dilipkumar Roy

Basically, human beings can be classified into two broad categories : those who view the world in the light of their heart and those who view the world in the light of their mind or judgement. In Rabindranath and Dwijendralal these two attitudes were held in synthesis resulting in a poet-scholar's assessment of values. On the other hand, Atulprasad in his musical compositions and Saratchandra in his love of humanity evince the predominance of the heart. Saratchandra would often warn me not to brand even a most wretched sinner as a villain because in him lies dormant the Supreme Soul—He 'who always resides in the human heart' (*sadā janānān hrdayē sannibiṣṭah—the Upaniṣad*). The *Gītā* is more explicit on this point :

"Api chēt sudurāchārō bhajatē mām ananyabhāk,  
Sādhutēha sa mantabyaḥ samvak hyabasitō hi saḥ.  
Kṣīpraṇ bhābati dharmātmā śāśwat śāntiṇ nigachchhati."

—which means even a vile wretch can attain sainthood overnight and gain everlasting peace provided he dedicates himself absolutely to Lord Krishna. Saratchandra's character-gallery acquaints us with the coexistence of good and evil—an ideal lover latent in a destitute, a mean fellow with a core of compassion, virginity sparkling in a whore. In short, his exquisite exhibition of character-sketches reveals a strange overlapping of good and evil, light and darkness. This brief memoir leaves no room for an elucidation of this marvel of a truth about Saratchandra. Nevertheless, this virtually impossible feat has fascinated all his sympathetic and erudite critics. Half a century ago Saratchandra thus addressed me as he had finished reading my first novel *Manēr Paraś* : "The concluding portion of your novel is very beautiful. The writing of one who has learnt to survey the world with heartfelt compassion betrays pleasure and pain in balancing abundance. This book of yours serves as an illustration." This novel, in its second edition, has been renamed *Bhābi Ek Hay Ar*.

'Heartfelt compassion' is an expression of his own. And this is what he himself used as the unfailing elixir to inebriate countless lovers of literature. This truth was charmingly revealed to me during my train-journey with him as fellow-passenger to Brindaban. All the way at different stations he threw crumbs of bread to ugly mongrels—often with festering sores

all over their bodies—prowling on the platforms. To meet my query he thus explained himself : 'Ah me, could you name anything other than eating that can delight them ? It's a bliss to provide for the poor. Do you feel equally happy while bestowing your gifts upon someone who is well off ?' *Śrikānta*, his masterpiece, exerts a spell on our mind especially for this reason : we watch there scene after scene unfolding in a kaleidoscopic pattern shimmering in the picturesque splendour of his tireless compassion. It is a long time since I read this novel ; still that emaciated mongrel, depicted by his golden touch, stands out brilliantly in my memory even today. I wonder how *Śrikānta*, of all persons, could notice a destitute of a mongrel standing guard at the tumble-down cottage of its hospitable owner who was no more. 'What else is 'heartfelt compassion' ?'—one might ask. Now, to quote from the relevant portion :

"Round its neck there was still the familiar collar made up of hemstitched strips of the crimson edge of a cloth decorated with floral designs. I just wondered what that mongrel—the dearest object of affection of a childless woman—could live on, now that it remained all alone in the deserted cottage. It was unable by habit to scour for food in the neighbourhood ; nor was it strong enough for that. So, while, in a manner, starving, it was perhaps waiting for the person who once loved it. May be, it fondly believed she had gone on a visit somewhere and was sure to return some day or other. Is it all for nothing ? I said to myself, 'Is it so very easy to efface this longing ?'"

Every time I read the lines my eyes were bedimmed with tears urging me to offer my obeisance to the wonderful artist who could depict such a picture of love with just a few strokes of the pen. Yet (alas ! O, critic ! ) I have heard so many unsympathetic scholars remark that Saratchandra has supported immorality by pleading the cause of Sin !

But I could never follow these pseudo-moralists who light-heartedly ignore the cross-currents of worldly life and do not pause to consider the painful aspect of unfortunate characters like Abhayā, Annadādidi, Rājlaṣmī, Dēhdās and a host of others. Lost upon these self-styled critics is the supreme saying of Lord Jesus : "Don't try to sit in judgement over other men. Only he who has not committed any sin may do so." Saratchandra did not want to play the role of a reformist leader of society. Far from it. Deep down in his heart was the realisation that man is, after all, exceedingly weak-willed and helpless and it is all too easy for him to go astray inadvertently. One of his frequent remarks still rings in my ear : 'Mantu<sup>1</sup>, we should, on no account, insult man.' During our talks and also in a few letters written to me, my friend, the great genius Satyen Bose, echoed similar sentiment : 'Look, brother, we aren't *Brahmacharis* like Sukdeb<sup>2</sup> and we can't, therefore, curse sinners as a contemptible lot.'

Of course, this is not to say that to uphold wrong-doing is a measure of good sense. Simply it will not do to forget (and Saratchandra often sounded this warning) that the shortcut of branding a person as a stained character is not the best avenue to the attainment of stainless purity. It is equally worth remembering that to attempt to uphold a lofty ideal or to reshuffle society without an attitude of compassion is to attempt the impossible. There is no denying the fact that lots of opportunists seeking the royal road to popularity incline towards pornography and depict filthy scenes to present moral lapses in captivating hues. To become a great literary artist it is of prime necessity to acquire that deep insight which can pierce through hollow customary morality and discover a noble mind even in a moral delinquent. One may be called *Kaji*<sup>3</sup> because of mere analytical skill in the trial court of intelligence. But to become a poet, a seer or an artist one must have, first and foremost, the genius for lighting the vital lamp of love

<sup>1</sup> The writer's pet name.      <sup>2</sup> A born *Brahmachari* of Puranic fame. A *Brahmachari* is one practising abstinence from sex and other worldly pleasures.      <sup>3</sup> A judge (Muslim).



in the mortal eyes. Instances are plentiful where Saratchandra has set aside the judgement of the mortal eyes to startle us with revelations of some greater truth lit up with the lustre of his golden vision. And this is far beyond the reach of fact-finding realism. Shortsighted materialists stumble on this particular issue ; they cannot see, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, that 'nothing here is utterly what it seems', that is to say, to ignore the judgement of the inner vision on the evidence of the impression of the naked eye is to revel in bungling. That is why the *Upaniṣad* imparts lessons in the highest truth by means of random paradoxical self-contradictory resounding utterances 'Tad ējati tannaijati' (He is moving yet motionless), distant yet near, having a specific form yet formless, possessing qualities yet lacking them and so on.

I have not referred to the scriptural paradoxes to put on the philosophising cap. Far from it. I have just mentioned them to point out that there are different levels of truth and the deepest of them can find expression in language only through paradoxes. In literature the paradox appears in the contradictory effluence of various characters and incidents ; Peace veiled in tears, light inherent in darkness, Supreme Bliss installed in lovely lustre in the niche of Pain. For instance, how touching is the parental affection of the old fellow for the child in *Chandranāth*, who has no family relationship with him ! Or, again, how Chandramukhī in *Dēbdās* conceals a lover's heart in a whore's frame ! Poet-lyricist Atulprasad, remarked with tearful eyes after reading these two novels : 'Oh, Dilip, his pictures of love evoke instant tears.'

True, indeed, how often had I to wipe my eyes while translating into English his *Bindur Chhēlēy* and *Rāmēr Sumati*. What a panorama ! Nārāyaṇī playing the mother in *Rāmēr Sumati* and Gōkul emptying his heart for his brother in *Baikunthēr Will* ! The stage-performance of this last brought tears to my eyes. Then, there is Piyārī who, despite her being a professional dancer, emerged in the full brilliance of love ; Bijali in *Ādhārē Ālō* cracks coarse jokes and still comes forward to bless the new-born with a gift of her necklace. This episode in the story not only startles us but mellows our mind and makes us wonder at the deep compassion the noble-hearted writer bore towards fallen women. In his different stories he has reminded us again and again that the chief glory of womanhood lies not in chastity but in humanity. The exquisite depiction of sorrowing Chandramukhī in *Dēbdās* fascinates all readers alike. Again, how moving is his delineation of the character of Dēbdās who, even after his fall from grace, retains the frank superiority of his heart !

Once Saratchandra said to me : 'Mantu, whenever I think of the constant companions of my early life, I feel surprised indeed. They all came of a socially inferior stock—fishmongers, snakecharmers, tramps and a host of youngsters chased out of home by their parents. Some of them have died toppers, some have turned jailbirds and some others have joined the gang of rowdies. I wonder how in spite of siding with these people and shunning polite society I could manage to become whatever I am today.'

On a certain occasion I said to him : 'You remind me of Sri Aurobindo. You know how he was brought up in a haughtily westernized atmosphere. He was virtually insulated against traditional Indian culture. He returned from England to his native country an immaculate Anglicised youth of twenty two ignorant of all Indian tongues. Yet with the passage of time, fancy, how he shaped out—a gem of a patriot, a leader of the revolutionaries, a commentator of the *Vēdas* and a formidable Sanskrit scholar ! Strange are the ways of providence ! My venerable father often used to cite an English verse :

"There is so much good in the worst of us  
And so much bad in the best of us  
That it hardly becomes any of us  
To talk about the rest of us."

And Saratchandra flashed a smile at me as he said 'It is not difficult, Mantu, to teach such a moral lesson. But, you see, there are, in each of us, two ever-warring elements—judgement and compassion. They represent two opposing viewpoints, hence, they cannot but clash. Once you forwarded one of Sri Aurobindo's letters to me—and what an interesting letter it was! In it he remarked "Human beings are less deliberate and responsible for their acts than the moralists, novelists and dramatists make them" (*Among the Great*, p 303). Man drifts away in diverse directions in the cross currents of life—how and why, nobody knows for certain. So, first of all, I would like not to pose as a purist or a law giver but to share the miseries of human beings as a pre condition of forming individual estimates. This is not a mere figment of imagination. I have witnessed even among fallen women strange nobility or unthinkable generosity. On the other hand, I have come across instances of abominable meanness and incredible small mindedness among members of polished circles. I have often shuddered at my own experience. But, believe me Mantu, I have not succeeded till now in evolving a handy formula to describe the real nature of man.

His views I have tried here to sum up in my own words without altering their fundamental implications at all. In fact, he often startled me with accounts of his contrary experiences—not only of light (white) and darkness (black) dwelling together in a happy union, but of unexpected happenings goading mortals like us to unthinkable performances under strange emotional stress. Saratchandra was misunderstood by lots of so called moralists and saviours of religion mainly because his philosophy of life was a straightforward negation of their pseudo civilised preachings. And in this respect he can be ranked with Goethe, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Turgenev, Somerset Maugham and such like literary artists who have imparted similar message in their criticism of life. But the great literature of our country is yet to make room for such glaring inconsistencies of life, that is why we have taken it so very easy to award Saratchandra the discreditable sobriquet—an advocate of profligates—we, who have just failed to study the behaviour of his leading characters like Sāhiti, Chandramukhi, Bijali, Abhayā, Dēbdās and Surēś. Happily for us, times are changing. We have gradually learnt to honour the greatness of his compassionate outlook and, therefore, we are less loud in regretting that he has offended moral sense.

Even in our own days some uncompromising moralists accused him, to my amazement, saying that he delighted in painting scenes of transgression alone. Has he not drawn exquisite pictures of motherly affection and brotherly love besides his rare juvenile studies? And has he not given touching descriptions of conjugal love in its incomparable sweetness? In different stories he has extolled profound passion which Sri Aurobindo called 'psychic love'. In this connection I would like to say something about the portrayal of psychic love, affection and cordiality in the works of Saratchandra especially in case of Sri Aurobindo's unique notion about human love.

Sri Aurobindo, in his own way, divided love into three general categories. First, physical or relating to the fleshly demands of the organism. Second, vital or relating to the basic principles of growth, and third, psychic or pertaining to the core of the heart. Needless to say, the most profoundly satisfying of the three is psychic love. Sri Aurobindo lavished praise on Saratchandra's treatment of the tender emotions since it was inspired by the psychic instinct. I used to pass on to him various letters I received from Saratchandra. The last was dated the 3rd of Magh, 1341 B. S (1935). I was busy at the time translating *Nishkṛti* into English. The letter ran

"Dearest Mantu,

I have received all your letters. Here is my reply covering them one by one.

1 The photographs sent by you show that both you and Nishikanta have taken well. I

was so happy to see your face after a long time. If only I could see you once in the flesh! But perhaps it is hoping against hope. I take it that we will not meet again. Never mind!

2. It is reassuring to learn that the typewriter has reached you in good condition. What delights me most is the fact that you have liked it. To give something to a person who has already given his all is not really to offer a gift but to receive one. Believe me, I have received a lot. My gain far outweighs yours.

3. I have preserved with great care the letter Sri Aurobindo has written to me with his own hand. It is a gem.

4. I knew it for certain that you would do your best to attempt a competent translation of *Niskṛti*. And this not only because you love me but it is a characteristic of those who lead a saintly life. They cannot but do it. They may not do a piece of work at all; but once they take it up they never make a half-hearted attempt.

5. When Sri Aurobindo himself has agreed to revise it, the translation must be worth it. . . . It is only when you succeed in bringing out the translation of *Śrīkānta* that I will have good reasons to hope that the Western readers will hold a Bengali novelist in esteem. What now seems an impossibility will become possible through your enterprise and the blessings of Sri Aurobindo. I have no doubt about it.

6. I have already given you a free hand in the matter of translation. Reason is, you are not only a translator but a distinguished writer as well. There is no dearth of people trying indefatigably to belittle you. However they may try, your genius and devotion to duty far transcend their concerted effort. Moreover, you have with you the good wishes of your preceptor. Can it ever so happen that the resurgent power of your soul will be of no avail and their vile attempts will fructify instead? This is impossible, Mantu. ....

8. Let me conclude with a word about you. I am really grateful to you, Mantu. What else can I say? I am a habitually poor correspondent. It seems I cannot sum up my thoughts by any means. So whatever I should have said but could not adequately express should be set down to my inability and not certainly to my unwillingness.

Sri Aurobindo's New Year prayer had a profound appeal to me. He is undoubtedly a great poet.

Yours truly,  
Sri Saratchandra Chattopadhyay"

This letter I forwarded to Sri Aurobindo with a comment that it is the *elan vital* that nourishes the root of human existence and adds splendour to life's springtime. I went on to argue that the concept of the psychic urge of Gurudev's (Sri Aurobindo's) description is rather too serious and tends to kindle lofty aspirations without satisfying them or, as the Bengali idiom has it, tends to lift us high up on the tree only to take away the ladder and make the descent difficult. To crown it all, I cited some Western philosophers to fortify my scholarly pleading. Sri Aurobindo seemed to dismiss all my ponderous prattle almost with a smile in his reply.

"Sarat Chatterji's letter is not a glory of the vital at all, even though it may have come through the vital but not from it. If I were asked how does the psychic work in the human being, I could very well point to the letter and say: 'like that'...The psychic is the soul, the divine spark animating matter and life and mind and as it grows it takes form and expresses itself through these three—touching them to beauty and fineness—it worked even before humanity in the lower creation leading it up towards the human; in humanity it works more freely

though still under a mass of ignorance and weakness and hardness leading it up towards the divine. In Yoga it becomes conscious of its aim and turns inward to the Divine. It sees behind and above it—that is the difference.”

Later on, in another long letter to me Sri Aurobindo summed up his views about the working of the psychic in the domain of love and affection and its possible phases of interruption. This letter has been included in *Sri Aurobindo's Letters*, v. 2, in the chapter entitled : ‘Friendship and psychic love’. So I will try my best to bring out its central idea in a simple enough language. What he meant was something like this :

‘It will be an error to suppose that only the vital generates an intimate warmth and the psychic is a mere cold lacklustre flame.....The warm flame of psychic love and affection can, of course, transcend the vital. But since it is incandescently pure and steady, and not glitteringly fickle and wavering, it does not just pamper the ego.....Psychic love cannot usually come into its own in human dealings, nor does it manifest itself fully in the open yard of human nature. Its sublime revels complete the full circuit when the resultant effulgence and bliss turn to the Divine.....In the human level this supreme bliss makes its appearance once in a blue moon in fitful flashes. Nevertheless, it provides necessary elements for the sublimation of love even in the vital sphere, all the delicate nuances of charm, tenderness, fidelity and self-sacrifice. Any heart-to-heart communion is to be traced back to this original source.’

The interpretation looks rather sombre with all my attempt to simplify it. Still it remains my hope that the basic theme of this commentary will not appear unintelligible even to those who do not practise Yoga since everyone knows what genuine passion is. For instance, while we read Saratchandra it surely strikes us that his best depictions of love and affection are a glow with the rhythmic beauty of the soul. That is why along with its rebellious protest against conventional morality the psychic effusion has drawn all human or social appreciation, those who like to listen to profound Truths about love and affection and tender emotions—and not just the cooing of conventional adoration—have often outgrown the initial confusion to admit gratefully in the long run that Saratchandra has introduced in our literature a hitherto unheard of resonance of love. Let me cite an example. In his masterpiece *Śrikānta* he has sounded the fearless trumpet of rebellion against conventionality. Abhayā in *Śrikānta* is a unique character that spurned the baseness of prevalent morality on the evidence of a lover's swelling heart. She said : “Once I was made to utter the ceremonial hymns of marriage. Is that forced utterance the only truth in my life and everything else false ? Are such glaring injustice and cruel torture totally meaningless for me ? Am I to take it that I no longer possess the rights of a wife and have to forgo my claim to motherhood ? Am I to deny myself the rights of a social being, the privileges of worldly life and the common human pleasures ? Should a wife treat her womanhood as forfeited and nullified simply because she has been turned out unjustly by a heartless, corrupt liar who happens to be her husband ? Was it for all this, that God created woman and sent her down to the earth ?”

Saratchandra had deep regard for womankind. He would often say : ‘Women are born into the world with the Godgifted dual energy of conservation and direction. It is because we, men folk, are blind to this reality that we often dub them the nervous, moist-eyed weaker sex. But in human society where are we to seek the most intimate revelation of power ? In the enduring capacity, of course. Hence the Bengali proverb : ‘He who endures lasts’. That our women do not yield to repeated blows of fate is too obvious a fact to blink at. I have heard you say that the *Tantras* describe woman as the power of man. (Here the reference is to the scriptural message, often quoted by me : ‘Śaktiṣṭhānāṁ binā dēbī ! Muktirhāsyāya

kalpatē'; that is, he who seeks freedom without an idea of power makes himself ridiculous). Europeans often call the veiled and bashful women of our society 'slaves of men'. Had it been the real character of our women the chariot-wheel of our society would have been crushed to smithereens long ago. By whom are our movements induced? Does not the *Mahābhārata* describe the lady of the house as the house itself? He would often point out that his staunch support of women lay at the root of his recognition in the literary field.

I would again corroborating him. 'Swami Vivekanda also shared your viewpoint. He often remarked that woman is the lustre, the beauty, the pillar of home. How can I express the great joy I had felt while witnessing the power of conservation of your female characters? It is extremely sad that Mr. So-and-So has laughed at the pettiness of women in his own writings.' In reply, Saratchandra sent me a trenchant note: "You are fond of Mr. So-and-So. I hesitate to speak out lest I should hurt your feelings. Still I feel you should know the truth of the matter. Someone has written that a literary product cannot attain greatness if the artist behind it is not himself a great soul. (It was an oft-quoted remark made by Romain Rolland in his *Life of Beethoven* which I mentioned to him so often). Personally, I subscribe to this view. ....Such examples are useless and decorum forbids one to put these in writing. But it remains a fact that those who consider it Realism to slander womankind unthinkingly lack not only Idealism but Realism as well. Such people are haughty poseurs and pride themselves on their ignorance. Literature never comes of the habit of discrediting women. With love, yours etc., dated 5 Jyāistha, 1340 B.S."

Saratchandra's writings are replete with descriptions of the qualities, charms and talents of women. His Annadādidī, Bīṣwēśwarī, Ramā, Abhayā, Rājākṣmī, Chandramukhī, Bijali, Śōṇaśī, Kamallatā and a host of others make up a fascinating galaxy. Their common outstanding feature is the unbending strength of character. In particular, his portrayal of motherly love is a tribute to his brilliant towering genius. He said somewhere in *Śrikānta*: "How can I turn mendicant when I come across mothers and sisters even during my casual walks along the road?" His male characters seem, as it were, to have taken their native hue from the invincible fortitude of their female counterparts. And when this dazzling miracle of his genius startled all, the women of our society led a secluded existence.

On his birthday, 31 Bhādra, 1339 B. S. (1932), Tagore wrote to him:

"Had I not been yardpressed by some current domestic problems I would have surely attended the meeting in celebration of your birthday. ...You have won over your countrymen by the force of your genius and have gained free access to the inmost recesses of their hearts. Your pen has woven a new pattern of smiles and tears round the Bengali frame of mind. All your life you have lit a most sacred lamp which will burn steadily to keep alive the lambent flame of Bengali literature in the temple of the Bengali mind on the hallowed altar of eternity."

Saratchandra often said to me: 'Men and women crowd the stage of Western literature in a bewildering variety before an endless array of foot-lights. Plots of fiction are continuously diversified..characters of both sexes unite in various situations—on board a ship, inside a mine, in a hotel, within the campus of a sanatorium, in course of a world-tour. Jointly they put their shoulder forward to draw the chariot of the unexpected in various adventures. But in our country there is hardly any scope for this spirit of freedom. Here we have the same old sew-and-gusset-and-seam tradition. Our social milieu does not lend a happy wing to romance. Our love affairs are woefully lacking in variety compared with those of the West. Just think of those rituals with their grey monotony—anointing the bride's body with *halud* paste, flower-bedecked nuptial bed, the blowing of conchs, illumination, music and fireworks; now place all this beside their vast

background. This will give you some idea of the troubles I had to face in creating dramatic situations for romance.'

I have given above my own version of his frequent regrets over the misjudgement of our shortsighted punitan critics. But don't we say, 'It is a bad workman who finds fault with his tools'? So, Saratchandria, despite being cornered, made an all-out effort to launch the pinnace of his romantic muse in full sail. He achieved the impossible by borrowing the lustre of the feminine heart. When we made a comparative study of his male and female characters we noticed in the latter a far more competent grasp of literary beauty than in the former and this achievement was due to the weaving of a rainbow magic of joy and smiles on the murky cloud of pain and tears. Tagore also praised this superb feat in unstinted terms. As far as I remember, Pramatha Chaudhuri once arranged a unique ceremony in his residence to pay simultaneous homage to Tagore and Saratchandria and made them sit side by side. I was privileged to attend that unforgettable function. My mind waxed lyrical as I listened to the dialogue between the two supreme literary artists. I still remember Tagore saying, 'Saratchandria, you have studied the Bengali society from within. I, on the other hand, have just peeped in from without. Honestly, that's what I mean. Reason is, ours was a sheltered life. You've, therefore, seen a lot of things there that will ever remain beyond my reach. In this context he referred to Śōṣaī Bhanabī and *Pallī-Samāj*.

There was, however, one point of resemblance between these two prodigies. They both installed woman in the realm of love and esteem and bliss, and allowed her resplendent energy free play on the stage of life. I recall how, in my adolescence, I was carried away by the portrayal of Ānandamayī in *Gōrā*—a character combining generosity, brilliance and sweetness in spontaneous harmony.

In course of time, some misunderstanding parted these two masters, much to my regret. I wanted, in my own humble way, to forge a reunion. I wrote Tagore about my English translation of *Niskṛti* saying that Sri Aurobindo himself had agreed to revise my translation. In compliance with my request Tagore at once sent me a tribute, composed in English, extolling the genius of Saratchandra. This was incorporated in my English version of *Niskṛti*, entitled *Deliverance*, as a foreword. To quote from its concluding part: "He has imparted a new power to our language and achieved the best reward of a novelist: he has completely won the hearts of Bengali readers." (March 1935)

There is a saying in Sanskrit 'Śrēvānsi bahu bighnāni', that is 'the path of the ideal is strewn with setbacks'. Saratchandra once gladly made up his mind to accompany me to Santiniketan. But, as luck would have it, the plan was somehow upset and his visit had to be postponed. Tagore wrote to me that Saratchandria won't come. Saratchandria wrote to me: 'I'm afraid I don't stand high in the poet's favour. Of course, I can never consider myself out of his debt. In my literary career I've accepted him as my preceptor. But fortune just stood on the way.' The pity of it!

But, on closer analysis, all these differences of opinion or even any estrangement will seem transitory. The fact or the truth of the matter is that Tagore appreciated the genius of Saratchandria and Saratchandria, on his part, paid homage to Tagore in the manner of a disciple conveying obeisance to his preceptor. I have heard Tagore say time and again that the appreciation of talent knits a heart-to-heart bond between individuals, all other passing moods being illusory, going as they come.

The following episode will illustrate the extent of Saratchandra's devotion to Tagore. Once some anti-Tagore critics said to Saratchandria: 'Your writing we all understand well. But

the confusing stuff of Rabindianath is too much for us.' Pat came the reply : 'Right you are. It's because he writes for people like us and I take up my pen for people like you.' A masterly rebuff.

So far I have dwelt at length on his diverse qualities. But, I am afraid I could not adequately describe the magnetic quality of his eagerly affectionate heart that attracted millions of Bengalis towards him. Before closing this account I would like to say a word or two about how he lavished his delectably sweet affection upon a poor fellow like me year after year. In one of his letters to me (vide my *Smṛtichāraṇ*, second part) he wrote .

"...Afterwards the news reached me one fine morning that you have renounced worldly life and become a mendicant. Suddenly it struck me that personally I had suffered a grave loss. Can you make little of the pain we are bound to feel at the grim prospect of missing you for ever ?" ( Kartik, 1338 B.S., 1913 ) Again :

"I have been watching with interest your development since you \*joined the Pondicherry Ashrama. I am happy that the Ashrama life has nourished your studies in both range and depth resulting in an introspective grasp of truth. All this was possible because your wisdom and scholarship are as humble as they are calm. The more I judge you from this angle the more charmed I become. I feel glad to think that you and I belong to the same camp. Your genuine amiability will save you from deterioration." ( Jyaistha, 1340 B.S., 1933 )

Yet again :

".....Even in your younger days your musical talent, your sincere attachment to gifted persons, and your other activities argued you to be a person of taste and refinement. That is why the love I bear to you is genuine. Outward influences cannot tarnish it. My joy knows no bounds as I see my earnest hope come true—the hope I expressed long ago at the first sight of your writing. I bless you once again : May your ambitions be realized." ( Magh, 1342 B.S., 1936 )

He would often tell me a secret wish. It was about seizing a chance to go abroad with me. He longed in particular to see Bertrand Russell, the great thinker. In a longish letter he wrote : "It is good that Mantu has not returned as a barrister. His itinerant role has strengthened Bengal's ties of love and respect with various nations and societies and the masses thereof. He is a well-known figure. He is also loved by all. If I can accompany him I will be received well everywhere. But that desire and the joy born of it have now all come to nought." ( Phalgun, 1337 B.S., 1930 )

In one of my Bengali songs I have said : 'ভালবাসি বলা সহজ ,কঠিন শুধু ভালবাসা' ( to profess love is far easier than to practise it). This song, like many others of its kind, was set to a Western tune. I used to sing him such songs. The song under reference occurs in my *Surāñjali* with full notation.

Saratchandra attained fulfilment in his two-fold mission of honouring the liberal and the beautiful in art and loving the people in society. My salutations to him !

“দেখেছ তুমি দর্শনীরে প্রণাম করি’ সুন্দরে,  
সাক্ষ্য নভে চন্দ্রে বেসে ভালো ।  
দরদী তুমি, শিল্পী তুমি, চিরপ্রেমিক অন্তরে,  
আধারে হার মানোনি বরি’ কালো ।”

Now the time has come for rounding off. How can I give a complete account of what I have received from a wonderfully great artist like Saratchandra ? No, I don't mean to repay

my debt to him. A debt of such magnitude is not a burden but a treasure. Now as an octogenarian I think of Saratchandra in the radiance of his many-faceted personality : his unfathomable affection, his innumerable thought-provoking remarks, and, above all, his deeply devotional nature. 'It is only the devoted who can acquire knowledge' (śraddhābān labhatē jñānam), as the *Gītā* says. My last meeting with Saratchandra stands out in my memory. It was on the 8th of August, 1937. I was commissioned to sing at different celebrations in Calcutta and my stay in the city was of a short duration of two or three months. Naturally, I could not visit him as often as I would like. I made time to call at his house—always an abode of joy—on the 15th, the day of the birth anniversary of my Gurudeb, Sri Aurobindo. In a voice charged with profound affection he said : 'Hallo Mantu, come in. I couldn't see enough of you this time. There's no knowing if we shall meet again. But you've come on the occasion of your Gurudeb's birth anniversary. How can you stay out now ? So, here we part. I'd only request you to keep us in mind and convey my *pranam* (obeisance) to your Gurudeb.' '*Pranam*, you say ?' I made bold to ask. He retorted with a smile : 'It's queer to hear a godless person like me utter the word 'pranam', isn't it ? Listen, Mantu, I don't know Yoga and other rites. I don't know the *Tantras* and sacred hymns. But I subscribe to a single belief—and it is that he who hasn't learnt to bow in a spirit of reverence can't get anything of lasting worth.' Tears welled up in my eyes as I bowed to him and stepped out of the room. We never met again. But all that day the burden of an Urdu song kept ringing on the lyre of my heart :

তোমায় প্রণাম করতে হৃদয় চায়।

মরণকে জীবন দেবনা, দেব তোমার পায় ।

To thee will I bow down,  
My heart longs for it ,  
To Death I won't offer my life,  
I'll lay it at your feet.

*Translated by Ashim Mukhopadhyay*





# মানবতাবাদী শরৎচন্দ্র

আবুল ফজল

মানবতাবাদী কথাটা আমি এখানে সীমিত অর্থেই ব্যবহার করছি। মানবতাবাদ কথাটা আরো ব্যাপক, বর্তমান রাজনৈতিক পরিভাষায় তার পরিধি অসীম। মানবসত্তার সঙ্গে জড়িত, মানবিক জীবনের সঙ্গে সম্পর্কিত সব কিছুই মানবতাবাদ নামে চিহ্নিত। মানবদেহের অভ্যন্তরে যে হৃদয় নামক যন্ত্রটি রয়েছে, যা সবরকম মানবিকতার উৎস ভূমি, সে উৎসের উপরই রচিত হয়েছে শরৎচন্দ্রের সাহিত্যকর্মের ভিত্তি। তাই তাঁকে আমরা প্রধানত হৃদয়ধর্মী লেখক হিসেবেই জানি। তাঁর রচনার প্রধান আকর্ষণও এ কারণে। তাঁর সাহিত্যে তিনি যেসব নরনারীর পারিবারিক আর সামাজিক জীবন-যন্ত্রণা ও সমস্যার অবতারণা করেছেন—এক অদৃশ্য হৃদয়ানুভূতি আর সহানুভূতির সাথেই তাদের চরিত্র আর ছবি এঁকেছেন তিনি।

মানুষের আবেদন সীমাবদ্ধ, বুদ্ধির বিদ্যুতালোক মানুষকে ক্ষণিকের জন্য চমৎকৃত করে মাত্র। যেমন আধুনিক সাহিত্যের intellectualism আমাদের করছে। কিন্তু অকৃত্রিম হৃদয়ানুভূতির আকর্ষণ সার্বজনীন - বাঙালী হৃদয়ের এ সার্বজনীনতারই নিপুণ ও দরদী শিল্পী শরৎচন্দ্র। শরৎচন্দ্র নিম্নমধ্যবিত্ত পরিবারের সন্তান, যে নিম্নমধ্যবিত্ত পরিবার আধুনিক বাংলা সমাজের বুনিন্দা। বিষ্ণু, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও সমসাময়িক বাংলা সাহিত্যের অন্যান্য জ্যোতিষ্কমণ্ডলীর দৃষ্টি ছিল কিছুটা উর্ধ্ব ও বাহিমুখী—রাজ্যবাদশাহ, জমিদার ও অভিজাত সম্প্রদায়ের কৃত্রিম জীবনযাত্রার মধ্যেই সীমিত (রবীন্দ্রনাথের ‘গল্পগুচ্ছ’ অবশ্য ব্যতিক্রম)- বৃহত্তর বাঙালী সমাজের তেমন উল্লেখযোগ্য স্থান ছিল না ঐ সাহিত্যে।

শরৎচন্দ্রের বিচিত্র জীবন, নিম্নমধ্যবিত্ত মানসিকতা, সাধারণ বাঙালী সমাজের সঙ্গে তাঁর গভীর পরিচয় এবং ঐ সমাজের সুখদুঃখ, আশানৈরাশ্য, সৌন্দর্য ও কদর্যতা সবকিছুর অভিজ্ঞতা সঞ্চে তাঁর কোন বাধা ছিল না। এ পরিচয় ও অভিজ্ঞতা আর তাঁর সহজাত অকৃত্রিম দরদী মন তাঁকে করে তুলেছিল সে উপেক্ষিত ও তথাকথিত অনভিজাত সমাজজীবনের উদগাতা, তাদের প্রতিদিনের সুখদুঃখময় জীবনের সার্থক শিল্পী। ঘনিষ্ঠ পরিচয় আর অকৃত্রিম দরদের সাথে যে ছবি আঁকা হয় তা জীবন্ত আর প্রাণস্পর্শী না হয়ে পারে না। তাই শরৎচন্দ্রে আঁকা পতন-অড়াদয়ে মেশানো মানুষগুলি আমাদের এতো প্রিয় ও এতো আপন মনে হয়। তাঁর আঁকা সামাজিক অর্থে স্থলিত-চরিত্র মানুষগুলিও আমাদের মনে ঘণার সঞ্চার করেনা বরং আমাদের মনুষ্যত্ববোধকে দিয়ে থাকে নতুন dimension এবং নতুন আলোড়নও।

হৃদয়ানুভূতির অকৃত্রিমতা আর প্রবল মনুষ্যত্ববোধে তাঁর অঙ্কিত প্রতিটি নরনারীকে রক্তমাংসের মানুষ হিসেবে চিনে নিতে বেগ পেতে হয় না। তাদের জীবনের ক্ষুদ্রতা ও দুর্বলতা আমাদের মনে অনুকম্পা আর সহানুভূতির সঞ্চার করে, তাদের জীবনের সৌন্দর্য, সত্যানুরাগ ও অকৃত্রিমতা আমাদের মুগ্ধ করে। এ অকৃত্রিম দরদ ও প্রবল মনুষ্যত্ববোধ শরৎসাহিত্যের প্রধান বৈশিষ্ট্য।

শরৎচন্দ্র নিম্নক গম্প দিয়ে তাঁর পাঠকদের ভোলাতে চান নি, তিনি মানুষ সৃষ্টি করেছেন, মানুষকেই দাঁড় করিয়েছেন পাঠকদের সামনে—এ মানুষ তাঁর চারপাশের মানুষ, চেনা-জানা, তাঁর যেমন তেমন তাঁর পাঠকদেরও, তাই শরৎচন্দ্রের minor চরিত্রগুলিও অপরিপূর্ণ, তারা সবাই মেসুদগুওয়ালা মানুষ। 'রামের স্মৃতি'র মতো ক্ষুদ্র কাহিনীর ক্ষুদ্রতম চরিত্র নীলমনি কবিরাজ কিম্বা নেতা যিকেরও কি আমরা ভুলতে পারি। তাঁর যেকোন বইর কথা স্মরণ করতে গেলেই সে বইর পাঠপাঠীদের কথাই সর্বপ্রায়ে আমাদের স্মরণে জাগে আর বইতে তাদের অস্তিত্ব শুধু নামমাত্র নয়, তারা স্বেচ্ছা মানুষকেই তাদের প্রতিদিনের সুখদুঃখ, পুলকবাথা ও হাসিকান্না নিয়েই আমাদের মনের সামনে ভেসে ওঠে। গম্পাংশ কোথায় ভুলিয়ে যায়। শরৎচন্দ্রের লেখায় তাই কেউ গম্প খোঁজে না, গম্প না পেলে কেউ কিছুমাত্র হতাশাও বোধ করে না। তাঁর পাঠপাঠীগুলি কে কিরকম মানুষ হয়ে উঠেছে সেটুকু পরিচয়েই পাঠক মুগ্ধ। নব নব চিন্তা আর ভাবেব অপূর্বতায়, বুদ্ধি ও উপমার বিদূষদীপ্তিতে রবীন্দ্রনাথ অতুলনীয় কিন্তু সাধারণ বাঙালি নরনারী, বিশেষ করে অবহেলিত ও সমাজ-লাঞ্ছিতদের চরিত্র চিত্রণে মনে হয় শরৎচন্দ্র অপ্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী।

এখানে শরৎচন্দ্রের বিতর্কমূলক উপন্যাস 'শেষ প্রশ্ন' সম্বন্ধে দু'চাট কথ্য হয়তো অপ্রাসঙ্গিক বিবেচিত হবে না। কারণ এখানেও আমরা মানবতাবাদী শরৎচন্দ্রকেই দেখতে পাই। 'শেষ প্রশ্ন' বিতর্কমূলক আর তর্কবহুল উপন্যাস, এ সম্পর্কে সন্দেহের অবকাশ নেই। 'শেষ প্রশ্নে' শরৎচন্দ্র এমন সব প্রশ্নের অবতারণা করেছেন যাবৎ সপক্ষে বিপক্ষে বহু তর্ক ও বাদানুবাদ করা যায়। তবে বিচার্য, এসব তর্ক ও বাদানুবাদ উপন্যাসের স্বাভাবিক গতিতে ব্যাহত করে কোথাও রস ক্ষুণ্ণ করেছে কিনা। শুধু তর্ক ও সমস্যাবহুল বলে 'গোরা' কিম্বা 'ঘরে বাইরে'কে আমরা খাটো করে দেখি না। ব্যক্তিজীবন ও সমাজজীবনে সমস্যা যখন অস্বীকার করার উপায় নেই তখন স্বাভাবিক নিয়মে সে সব সমস্যা আমাদের গম্প উপন্যাসেও অনুপ্রবেশ করবে বইকি। 'নারীর মূলা' বইতে এ সম্পর্কে তাঁর অধ্যয়ন আর সচেতনতার যথেষ্ট পরিচয় রয়েছে। ফলে বহু প্রশ্ন ও জিজ্ঞাসা যে শরৎচন্দ্রের মনে আলোড়ন তুলতো তা সহজেই অনুমেয়। তার উত্তর সন্ধান করতে গিয়েই, মনে হয়, 'শেষ প্রশ্ন' রচিত হয়েছে।

এ বইর মুখ্য উদ্দেশ্য হয়তো চরিত্রচিত্রণ ছিল না। তবুও শিম্পী শরৎচন্দ্রের হাতে এই বাদানুবাদ ও বিচিত্র তর্ক বিতর্কের ভিতর দিয়েও প্রত্যেকটি চরিত্র স্বকীয় বৈশিষ্ট্যে অপরিপূর্ণ হয়েই ফুটে উঠেছে। আশুবাবুর সহিত অবিনাশের, অক্ষয়ের সহিত হরেন্দ্রের, অজিতের সহিত শিবনাথের বা কমলের সহিত নীলমার কিম্বা নীলমার সহিত মনোরমার কোন সাদৃশ্যই নেই। এরা প্রত্যেক পৃথক ও বিশিষ্ট। শরৎচন্দ্র তাঁর পূর্ব রচনায় বহু অপরিপূর্ণ নারী চরিত্র এঁকেছেন যারা স্বকীয় পাঠকসমাজের হৃদয়ে শ্রদ্ধা ও প্রীতির আসন পেয়েছে। কিন্তু 'শেষ প্রশ্নের' কমলের তুলনা শরৎসাহিত্যে কেন সারা বাংলা সাহিত্যে বোধ করি আর কোথাও খুঁজে পাওয়া যাবে না। কমল তীক্ষ্ণদী শরৎচন্দ্রের বুদ্ধি ও মনীষার সর্বসংস্কারমুক্ত আধুনিকতার এক অসামান্য প্রতীক হিসেবেই যেন সৃষ্টি। কোন রকম সংস্কারের মোহ কমলের নেই। হিন্দুসমাজের বহু যথেচ্ছ লালিত ও পরমাপ্রিয় বহু যুগযুগান্তরের সংস্কারকে সে নির্মমভাবে আঘাত করেছে ও অবলীলাক্রমে উপেক্ষা করে গেছে, অথচ তার প্রতিটি কথা ও আচরণ অতি সহজ, অসংকোচ ও অকুণ্ঠ। বইর প্রতিটি পাঠপাঠীর সঙ্গে তার আচরণ ও মতামতের জন্য তাকে জবাবদিহি করতে হয়েছে। প্রত্যেকের সঙ্গে সে এক সম্তরখী বেষ্টিত অভিমতের মতো তর্ক করেছে, বাদানুবাদ করেছে অথচ অবনমিত হয়নি, আত্মলজ সত্যের শাণিত ছুরিকা দিয়ে সে প্রতিপক্ষের 'উদ্ধৃতি' ও বাক্যজালকে ছিন্নবিচ্ছিন্ন করে দিয়েছে। কিন্তু তার কথায় আর বাবহারে সে কখনো কড়তা দিয়ে অশালীনতার পরিচয় দেয়নি। জয়ের দিনে যেমন সে আনন্দোৎসব হয়নি, তেমন পরাজয়ের দিনেও মিলিয়ে যায়নি তার মুখের হাসি। অবাচিত আদরেও সে নিজেকে আপ্যায়িত মনে করেনি, তেমন অপমানিত হয়েও মুগ্ধে পড়েনি। জীবনের সুখ ও দুঃখকে অতি সহজভাবে এবং অত্যন্ত নিবিকারচিত্তে গ্রহণ করেছে। এদিক দিয়ে তার মনের শক্তি আর সংযমের কোন তুলনা হয় না, হয়তো খুব কম পাঠকই তাকে শ্রদ্ধা ও প্রীতির চোখে দেখবে, কিন্তু উপেক্ষা কেউ তাকে করতে পারবে না। এ ধরনের অপূর্ব ব্যক্তিত্ব সৃষ্টিতেই শরৎচন্দ্রের প্রতিভার প্রধান সাফল্য। মনুষ্য ও ব্যক্তির দীপ্তিতে গম্ভীর ('মহেশ') চরিত্রও কি কম উজ্জ্বল! অথচ সে গম্পের পরিসর কত ক্ষুদ্র! কমলের মতামত ও যুক্তিতে কতখানি সত্য আছে তা বিচারের ভার কালের হাতে, কিন্তু যে গভীর আন্তরিকতা ও বিশ্বাস ও প্রত্যয়ের সাথে সে তার মতামত ব্যক্ত করেছে তা এ বইয়ের ভিতরের ও বাইরের বহুজনের আজন্ম লালিত বহু বিশ্বাসের যে শিকড় ধরে নাড়া দিয়েছে তাতে সন্দেহ নেই। এদিক দিয়ে এ বই শরৎসাহিত্যের অন্যতম Land Mark। কমল বিবাহিত দম্পতির সন্তান নয়, কিন্তু তার চরিত্রের ও জীবনের নির্মল সৌন্দর্য, অবিমিশ্র সহানুভূতি ও অকৃত্রিম সত্যগ্রহ দেখে রবীন্দ্রনাথের ভাষায় তাকে সন্মোদন করে বলা যায়.....

“অব্রাহাম নহ তুমি তাত  
তুমি ষিজোন্তম, তুমি সতাকুল জাত।”

শরৎচন্দ্র তাঁর সব প্রধান চরিত্রে সত্য ও মনুষ্যত্বের উপর জোর দিয়েছেন, মনুষ্যত্বকে করেছেন উষোখন। মানবিক মর্যাদা তাঁর সব রচনার এক প্রধান সম্পদ।

# Saratchandra :

## The humanist

Abul Fazal

I would like to use the word 'humanist', in the present context, in a rather limited sense. The expression 'humanism' is much wider ; when used in the current political jargon, its connotation tends to defy all limits. All that is connected with the being of man and his existence and all that relates itself to human life bear the stamp of humanism. The literary works of Saratchandra stem from that subtle mechanism inside the human being, *the heart*, which is the source of all humanism. This precisely is the reason why we identify him as a writer with pronounced emphasis on human emotions and feelings. The primary appeal of his works also lies here. The men and women he has introduced in his works, along with their problems, both social and personal, and the agonies of their life have all been portrayed with an unmatched feeling of sympathy and deep compassion.

The appeal of the intellect is a limited one ; the enchanting impact of intelligence on man lasts only for a while, as is the case with the intellectualism of modern literature. The appeal of the genuine emotions of the heart is, on the other hand, universal ; and Saratchandra is the skilful and sympathetic artist of this universal element of the Bengali vista. Saratchandra himself belonged to a lower middle class family, and it was in this segment that the modern Bengali society had its roots. Bankimchandra, Rabindranath and other luminaries of contemporary Bengali literature had their eyes fixed on a slightly higher and detached phenomenon : the artificial way of life of the royalty, the feudal lords and the nobility (the short stories of Rabindranath are, of course, exceptions) ; the larger Bengali community did not feature notably in their works. Saratchandra led a varied life, shared the qualities of the lower middle class psyche, and had an intimate knowledge of the Bengali society at the commoner's level. His access to and experience of that society, its feelings of happiness and frustration, its hopes and disappointments, its beauty and ugliness, were total. This knowledge and experience, coupled with his natural and genuine sympathy, turned him into an exponent of that neglected part of the society which was outside the spheres of the so-called aristocracy and a masterly artist of the pleasures and the miseries which condition life there. The image which originates from intimate knowledge and is drawn with a feeling of genuine sympathy cannot but be lively and touching.

This is why the characters of Saratchandra, who have their own fall and rise in life, appear so dear and so close to us. We do not develop any hatred for even those of his characters who, from a social point of view, have a dubious morality ; they, on the other hand, add a new dimension to our sense of humanism and move us anew.

One does not find it difficult to recognise each of his characters as human being of flesh and blood, and that because these have been portrayed with a genuine feeling of sympathy and a strong sense of humanism. The limitations of their life and their weaknesses call for our pity and sympathy ; the beauty of their life, their love for truth, and their lack of all that is artificial for our admiration. This genuine feeling of sympathy and strong sense of humanism are the main characteristics of the works of Saratchandra. Saratchandra never tried to satisfy his readers merely with stories. He had re-created human beings and presented them before his readers, and they are all drawn from the men and women around him and are very familiar to both himself and his readers. Even minor characters of Saratchandra are, therefore, of remarkable excellence—they are real men and women with a backbone. Can we forget Nilmañi Kabirāj or Nētya, the maid, the very minor characters of a short story like *Rāmēr Sumati* ? When one tries to recollect any of his works, the characters of that book are remembered first, and that too not only as mere names, but as real human beings along with the sufferings and the pleasure of their everyday life. The story of the book is lost. No one, therefore, looks for a story in the works of Saratchandra, and no one feels disappointed if he does not find one. The reader is enthralled by the process by which his characters develop into real human beings. Rabindranath is matchless for his stream of new ideas, his excellence of thought, and the electric effect of his intellect and imagery, but as far as the characterisation of the common Bengali men and women, particularly of those who are neglected and oppressed by the society, is concerned, Saratchandra appears to be unbeaten.

It may not be irrelevant here to make a few comments on Saratchandra's debatable novel *Śēṣ Praśna*. For, in this novel, too, we would find Saratchandra, the humanist, at work. *Śēṣ Praśna* admittedly, is a debatable novel full of arguments. The questions which Saratchandra has raised in this novel can be argued both for and against for long. What, however, is to be considered is whether or not the natural course of the novel and its artistic beauty have been affected by the introduction of these arguments. One does not rate *Gōrā* or *Gharē Bāirē* low merely because these deal with certain problems and concepts. Since problems do exist in life, both at personal and at social level, it would only be logical to expect a reflection of these in fiction. Saratchandra's awareness of such problems and his studies on these are self-evident from his work *Nārīr Mūlya*. That Saratchandra was disturbed by many problems and questions is easily understandable. *Śēṣ Praśna* seems to have been written as an attempt to find solutions and answers to those.

Characterisation was not perhaps the primary objective of this novel. In spite of this and in spite of long and complex arguments, each character is boldly and convincingly drawn in its own dimensions. Āśubāhu has nothing in common with Abināś ; Akṣaya with Harēndra ; Ajit with Śibnāth ; Kamal with Nilimā ; and Nilimā with Manōramā. Each is an individual and different from others. Saratchandra had, in his earlier works, portrayed a number of remarkable female characters, all admired and loved by the Bengali readers in general. But perhaps there is no match, in the whole of Bengali literature, for Kamal of *Śēṣ Praśna*. Kamal is an extraordinary symbol of the sharp and modern intellect of Saratchandra, free from all inhibitions. Kamal did not have any prejudices. She had hit hard and ignored with ease the prejudices which the Hindu society had reared very dearly for ages, and yet she is so very natural and free and at home in all her words and deeds. She had to defend her conduct

and opinion to each of the characters of the novel. Kamal, like Abhimanyu surrounded by the seven hostile charioteers, had argued and differed with each, but had never bowed down. She had, with her inner feeling of truth learnt through suffering, torn to pieces the hollow sentiments and the rhetoric of her opponents, but was never rude, nor indecent. On the day of her victory, she was not beside herself with joy, as she was not without a smile in her dark days. She did not feel flattered by appreciation which she did not expect, nor did she lose her heart when insulted. She had accepted the pleasures and the sufferings of her life with ease and an unruffled mind. Her mental strength and her self-control are both without a comparison. Perhaps only a handful of readers would like or admire her, but, then, none can ignore her. The main achievement of Saratchandra lies in his ability to create such a unique personality. The span of the story *Mahēś* in which Gaphur features is very limited, and yet how very bright is the character of Gaphur for his sense of humanism and for his personality.

It is for the future to judge the extent of the universality and truth of the views and arguments of Kamal. But the fact remains that the sincerity and the conviction with which she had expressed herself had shaken many age-old beliefs of a large number of persons, both within and outside the novel. From this point of view this novel is one of the landmarks in the works of Saratchandra. Kamal was not born out of a legal wedlock, but her life and character were of a beauty which had not any blemish. Her genuine love for truth and her unconditional feeling of sympathy may prompt one to address her in the words of Rabindranath :

“.....অব্রাহ্মণ নহ তুমি ভাত,  
তুমি ব্রহ্মোত্তম, তুমি সত্যকুল জাত।”

“.....a non-Brahmin you are not,  
A supreme Brahmin you are, born in truth.”

Saratchandra had emphasised truth and human qualities in all his principal characters, and had acted as an exponent of humanism. Human dignity is a major virtue of all his works.

# Saratchandra's *Pandit Maśāi*

R S McGregor

Saratchandra's early novel *Pandit Maśāi* (1914) is well known and esteemed in Bengal, but hardly seems to have received its fair share of attention from students of Bengali literature. The sensitive, troubled, resilient figure of its heroine Kusum has been overshadowed by Rājlakṣmī, Ramā, and others of Saratchandra's female characters, and neither this novel's social commentary nor any of its other characters have, perhaps, been of sufficient scope or novelty to keep the work in the forefront of attention. We find that Subodhchandra Sengupta devotes hardly more than a couple of pages specifically to *Pandit Maśāi* in his study of Saratchandra (1930), and mentions the work only in passing in his later study in English (1945); Tarapada Basu (1940) contents himself with a cursory analysis of its plot, and Kshitodkumar Datta, in whose study of Saratchandra's women characters it might have found a fitting place, deals with it there only incidentally in his introduction (1942). In later critical writing the position is perhaps similar, for neither Humayun Kabir in his studies of Saratchandra and of the Bengali novel (1957, 1968) nor Sukumar Sen in his *History of Bengali Literature* (1960) mention *Pandit Maśāi* by name. Yet Saratchandra's readers have not been wrong to hold this novel in such affection, and the present essay is offered on the occasion of the centenary of his birth as a tribute to a novel at once well known and little discussed, a familiar friend in literature, and one which we are perhaps the poorer for taking so much for granted.

The central role of Kusum in the novel is clear immediately from the circumstantial detail of the opening pages, and from the early incidents of the plot. But from the very outset Kusum shows certain additional attributes to those stressed by Sengupta. To Sengupta Kusum appears as a would-be traditional wife, whose maternal instincts have been frustrated and in whom a contradictory impulse of pride, or pique, holds her apart from her husband.<sup>1</sup> But we are told of Kusum's early history as an abandoned child bride and an innocent victim of a slight against her family's honour, the effects of which her mother has tried unsuccessfully to repair. If Kusum's attitude to her husband's family does indeed contain an element of pride, it is rather one of justified, wounded pride, and it is mingled now, as she begins to reconstruct her life in early adulthood, with a streak of contemptuous indifference towards her husband's



family. This is something different from the 'momentary pride' (ক্ষণিকের অভিমান) which Sengupta sees as underlying Kusum's tragedy.<sup>2</sup> The depth of the frustrations which have moulded Kusum's character are made very clear by Saratchandra, perhaps nowhere more so than in the flaring anger of the first of Kusum's quarrels with her pusillanimous elder brother Kuñja, who is busily seeking to reunite her with her husband, and in Kusum's resentment at the ill-treatment and publicity which she and her mother have received unjustly at her mother-in-law's hands. If Kusum is later to become an exemplar of frustrated mother-love, she is moved as well by other emotions which dictate inexorably the contradictory course of her actions. Saratchandra has been concerned from the first chapter to present her as a character of complex, rather than single and symbolic, motivation.

To a lesser degree, the same is true of Kusum's husband Bṛndāban. Bṛndāban is seen by Sengupta as characterised by 'calm tolerance and a forgiving nature' (প্রশান্ত সহনশীলতা ও ক্ষমাশীলতা)<sup>3</sup>, but another aspect of his character is of great, and even fundamental importance for his relationship with Kusum. This is the nature of his relationship with his widowed mother. Saratchandra makes it clear that Bṛndāban is a very dependent only son. He discusses his feelings for Kusum with his mother; he has full, and justified, confidence that she will succeed in arranging a marriage for Kuñja, a probably necessary preliminary to Kusum's return to his household, he is horrified at his mother's distress when a gift made by her to Kusum is ineptly returned, at Kusum's eventual request, by Kuñja, and at a later stage, when Kusum, even while longing for a rapprochement with Bṛndāban, hardens her heart in resentment of his mother and at recollection of the past, Bṛndāban for his part cannot bring himself to forgive this imagined insult to his mother. Here more than anywhere else is the sticking point in Bṛndāban's relationship with Kusum. Saratchandra develops for Bṛndāban a character and pattern of motivation which, if convenient for his purposes, is also a convincing one and sufficiently complex to sustain the theme of his relationship with Kusum, on which the theme of Kusum's relationship with Bṛndāban's young son, Charaṇ, in turn depends. (Bṛndāban's role as 'Paṇḍit Maśāī' and his enlightened work for the improvement of village life form a largely separate theme in the novel, not taken up until after the stalemate between himself and Kusum has been reached).

Against the background of such events Saratchandra traces the tentative and ill-starred course of Kusum's relations with Bṛndāban. An important aspect of Kusum's character throughout the novel is her regard for the traditional values and norms of behaviour of her society. If, when Bṛndāban's family make their unheralded visit to her house, she survives so traumatic an experience, it can indeed only be thanks to a greater personal strength than that normally drawn from piety, or from mere conformity to convention; but it is Kusum's desire to observe the proprieties of hospitality and her success in doing so which lead to her receiving the gift so fateful for Bṛndāban's and to her bowing impulsively at her mother-in-law's feet. Kusum's more traditional virtues are evidently important to Saratchandra from the beginning, even if elsewhere in the opening chapters we see more of the contentious and frustrated sides of her nature. It is in bringing out these that the helpless and inept Kuñja, with whom Kusum quarrels so resoundingly and repeatedly, fulfils his chief, contrastive function in the novel.

Saratchandra shows Kusum's dormant feeling for Bṛndāban stirred by Bṛndāban's sympathy and assistance at the time of the above family confrontation. But the promise which this emotion holds is to be disappointed. It will only be with the advent of Charaṇ that Kusum's character will soften, and the change, when it comes, will be dramatic. Charaṇ, the child that might have been hers, awakes in Kusum all the unfulfilled desires for a child and for a husband, and all the regrets for the past, that have been so long suppressed. The sense of outrage at what happened so long ago cannot be erased, for it is too deeply burnt into Kusum's heart, but it is

now dramatically transmuted. Wrong has indeed been done, but the wrong which Kusum sees is now that done by herself, that of the gift returned, and her reproach to Br̃ndāban and to her mother-in-law is now not for the past, but for their reluctance in the present to recognise her as a member of their family by sacrament and moral right—their *bau*. “অপরাধ আমার যত ভয়ানকই হোক”, she insists, “তবু ত আমি সে বাড়ীর বৌ”<sup>14</sup> But no similar change has come over Br̃ndāban, and he remains unmoved. It is this stubborn fixation, rather than any tolerance or indifference, that lies at the root of Kusum’s tragedy, just as surely as it is Kusum’s maternal love for Charaṇ that has awakened her love for Br̃ndāban and leads her now towards the anguished realisation that she is after all about to lose Br̃ndāban for the second time.

Chapters X and XI, two-thirds of the way through the novel, introduce not so much a secondary theme as a body of comment and interpretation by the author of aspects of Bengal village life. Here Paṇḍit Maśāi comes into his own. Saratchandra seems to be saying that two qualities combine in Br̃ndāban to make him the ‘true man’ (যথার্থ মানুষ) praised by his teacher Durgādās: desire to serve the village people, and ability to remain one with them in spirit while rendering the very service most divisive of traditional society, that of education. To be among the village people, and to be of them, and yet at the same time to be able to look beyond their immediate needs, is Saratchandra’s pedagogical ideal. But it is not certain that the educator-reformer will be able to maintain a just balance between the viewpoint of a traditional culture and the critical, eclectic perspective which he should bring to its interpretation. Br̃ndāban’s friend Kēśabdās fails to meet this second, vital requirement, and his school, in which he has sought to spread a patrician style of education ill-adapted to his pupils’ immediate needs, has failed. Saratchandra by no means necessarily agrees with every aspect of the views voiced by Br̃ndāban as a representative of the village population, and we may suspect that stressing as he does the need for education as the prerequisite for India’s advance, he will have welcomed any constructive activity for its spread. But he emphasises always the importance of the village perspective, and the reality of the village world. He stresses, too, that sympathy and inner involvement on the part of servants of a community must go hand in hand with a spirit and practice of self-help on the part of its members, so that it may develop with a constructive sense of purpose and as an integrated whole. There will then be real hope that those ills of life which stem from lack of education, and perhaps, even, other weaknesses in society and in the individual, may be removed or ameliorated.

The further reaches of Saratchandra’s idealistic vision may seem a strange complement to the realism and insight of his portrayal of Kusum, and his social comment less well integrated with the essential subject matter of *Paṇḍit Maśāi* than is the case, say, with Tagore’s *Gharē Bāirē*. But whether ‘at home’ or ‘abroad’, Saratchandra’s insistence on the need for cohesion between segments of society remains relevant today, and can still strike a chord of sympathy in the contemporary reader wherever a community is to be found in the world struggling to modernise, or to re-modernise, aspects of its life.

Finally, however, the novel belongs to Kusum. If the idealism of the conclusion is unsatisfactory, Kusum’s love, longing, courage and dignity are none the less highly memorable, for rarely in so short a space has a more revealing light been thrown on complex motivations of character against the background of day-to-day family life than here. In Saratchandra’s Kusum, and through her largely in *Paṇḍit Maśāi* as a whole, the reasons for Saratchandra’s popular success, and for the esteem in which he has been justly held both within and beyond Bengal, are very evident.

One may suggest in conclusion a particular aspect of Saratchandra’s influence beyond Bengal. The work of the Hindi-Urdu writer Premchand recalls in various ways that of Saratchandra.

The particular concern of both authors with village life, their gifts of realistic observation, the terse, graphic, colloquial style used frequently by both, and the ideals of service and self-dedication drawn from Vivekananda and Gokhale which both espouse, and develop often in a markedly unrealistic way, are aspects of this similarity. (There are, indeed, also differences between them; we may note, for instance, the less intensely emotional level at which Premchand's leading characters usually operate, and the fact that Premchand usually succeeds less well than Saratchandra in *Paṇḍit Maśāi* in combining discussion of social issues with realistic analysis of character and motivation). But in the above points of general similarity between a north Indian and a Bengali writer we see additional reason for the wide influence of Saratchandra. His themes and attitudes, while through and through Bengali, were not of Bengal alone but were close to the heart of India as a whole, and the best work in which he has given them expression can be said similarly to belong not only to Bengal, but, furthered by translation, to have become a part of India's general literary heritage.

We may ask ourselves whether any particular connexion between Saratchandra's work and that of Premchand may have existed. It seems improbable that there will have been much direct influence, since the two men were close contemporaries, and began their literary careers at almost exactly the same time, while Hindu or Urdu translations of Saratchandra's works did not in any case begin to appear until after Premchand's career in both Urdu and Hindi was well established. But it is of interest to us here that at least two short stories of Premchand's, both published in the same year (1932), are reminiscent in different ways of *Paṇḍit Maśāi*. In a story entitled *Kusum*, Premchand's heroine of the same name writes letters reproaching her husband for his flagrant neglect of her, much as is the intent of Saratchandra's *Kusum*, in her letter to Bṛndāban; she fears, as does Saratchandra's *Kusum*, that the husband may take another wife; and she acquires after her irrevocable separation a remarkable inner calm and self-control, reminiscent of the aspects of Saratchandra's *Kusum* which I have stressed; while the subject of Premchand's *The Thākūr's Well* (*Thākūr kā kuāṁ*) is the barring of low caste persons from an unpolluted well, a topic also introduced in *Paṇḍit Maśāi*. It is possible that Premchand may be under some general obligation to Saratchandra for his use of these themes together at this time, in much the same way as he is known to have made use of topical events in the construction of the plots of his novels. If this is so we are here reminded of the many close contacts in literature and language which have existed between Bengal and north India in the past, and of the possibility that here and there in a story or a motif found in the modern literatures of Hindi, Urdu, or indeed other Indian languages, a memory of Saratchandra Chattopadhyay, one of the most popular, deservedly successful, and truly influential of all modern Indian writers, is anonymously enshrined.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Saratchandra*, 10th ed., Calcutta, 1969, 60, 38.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, 38.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, 69.

<sup>4</sup> *Paṇḍit Maśāi*, 4th ed., Calcutta, 1957, 60.

# The place held by Pathēr Dābī and Śēṣ Praśna in the works of Saratchandra Chattopadhyay

L Strizhevskaya

The Soviet reader was introduced to the works of S. Chattopadhyay in 1951 when the magazine *Zvezda Vostoka* (Star of the East) featured his splendid story *Mahēś* which subsequently had many repeat editions. By the present time, in the Russian language alone, three books by Chattopadhyay have been issued in a total edition of 150,000 copies. They include *Gṛhadāha Śrikānta*, *Charitrahin*, *Palli-Samāj* and *Arakṣaṇīyā*. Particularly popular was *Gṛhadāha*, which came out as a separate book in the Russian and Lithuanian languages, and was later included in a collection of novels and stories by Chattopadhyay. The novel was also put out in a special edition for the blind.

Soon Saratchandra Chattopadhyay's books are to come out in the Ukrainian language.

In the fifties, Soviet literary historians began a study of the writer's creative heritage. The pioneer was A. Gnatyuk-Danilchuk. In his extensive foreword to the novel *Gṛhadāha*, he introduced the Soviet reader to Chattopadhyay's biography, the problems raised in his works, his major books, and gave an analysis of the novel.

In 1960 Y. Payevskaya, the eminent Indologist and critic, supplied the foreword to the novel *Śrikānta*.

Referring to the writer's biography, the critic shows the factors that made a realist of him, a man who championed human dignity and acutely reacted to social injustice.

The author of the introduction to the book of novels and stories by Chattopadhyay, issued in 1971, was the Indologist E. Komarov. This scientist, possessing a profound knowledge of India's history and economics, concentrated his attention on the social conflicts of the so-called 'village stories' and the writer's ideas on how they could be solved. He associated the writer's quests for an ethical ideal with the ideological quests of the Indian intelligentsia of those days, and noted the contradictoriness of the author's positions.

An analysis of the latter, very complex, period in the work of Chattopadhyay was made in *The Political Novel In The Works Of S. Chattopadhyay* and *The Novel Śēṣ Praśna As An Attempt Of Literary Innovation* by the author of this article. A signal place was devoted

to the writer likewise in the report *On The Question Of The Literary Situation In Bengal In The 20's Of The Twentieth Century* delivered at the All-Union Conference of Indologists.

The writer's place in development of Bengali and Indian literature was cited in works of a general nature by the Soviet Indologists V. Novikova and Y. Chelyshev.

In this article an attempt will be made to establish the place of the novels *Pathēr Dābi* and *Śēṣ Prasna* in S. Chattopadhyay's works.

As I see it, Chattopadhyay's literary career clearly falls into three stages, although within their limits his work naturally did not remain unchanged.

The first period (1893-1902) is that of his youthful avid interest in literature. The second, when, after a long intermission, he returned to literary activities, continued approximately up to 1920. The rise of anti-imperialist movement in India and the writer's personal part in it, as well as the new trends in the literary life of Bengal, were the foundation of the third stage in his work.

Along with R. Tagore, Chattopadhyay played an enormous role in creating the realistic socio-psychological novel. The leading theme in most of his works was the status of the woman. But in his first stage, the writer was only forming an idea of the problems arising out of this theme. In his second period, the suffering of those whose love turned out to be a violation of the accepted standards of conduct, became a magnifying glass, as it were, through which the writer was able to see the vices of the society of his day.

In a number of works of this second period (*Palli-Samāj* and *Bāmunēr Mēyē*), he criticized the feudal setup and bourgeois money-grabbing ethics from far broader positions. We find in them a multifarious depiction of the village; the author likewise raises the problem of the exploitation of the peasants by the money-lenders and landlords.

Chattopadhyay's talent as a psychological genre writer was also manifested in the specific genre tales new to Bengali literature and depicting the life of the 'big family' of the middle class (*Niṣkṛti*, *Bindur Chhēlē*, and *Rāmēr Sumati*).

In disclosing these themes, Chattopadhyay appeared as an innovator who facilitated the democratisation of Bengali literature, the awakening of interest in the life of the 'middle classes' and the peasantry, and compassion for those whom the society subjected to ostracism.

Chattopadhyay's treatment of the phenomena of life, his concepts of the human being show up the active humanism of this writer who boldly raised his voice against the grind of routine and for the triumph of the ethics.

As a rule, he limited himself to a statement of the problems, without offering any solutions to them, but, as Y. Payevskaya wrote, "even without the author's conclusions, by the realistic display of life and disclosure of its contradictions themselves" his works are "an accusation of the existing system which engenders oppression and injustice."

However, in the second period of his work there were works in which he tried to suggest his positive ideal, to find ways and means of delivering society from its evils, and of improving human relations. The novel *Palli-Samāj* shows that in the matter of raising culture in the village the writer relied on the educational work of solitary intellectuals. In *Gṛhadāha* he sees the ethical ideal in the modernisation and humanisation of Hinduism.

A characteristic trait of the writer's artistic style is his deep psychological delineations. He achieves an authentic and deep conveyance of the heroes' thoughts and feelings not so much through description, as through the conduct and speech of the heroes. The dialogue invariably

bears an enormous load in his works. Its important role was stipulated by the introduction into his work of the spoken language and, in some cases, of dialectical forms of speech, all of which served to democratise the language of literature.

The creation of typically national characters (in psychological makeup and outer manifestations), realistic reproduction of the general atmosphere and details of the Indian customs, posing of important problems of national life, and, lastly, close ties with the progressive social ideas of the country—these are the traits which made Chattopadhyay a deeply national writer and won him broad popularity outside his country.

Chattopadhyay approached the dividing line, which the twenties was for Bengali literature, as a writer with a well-defined creative individuality and clear-cut range of subjects. His popularity was great. And yet he was not satisfied. He felt that he had to write in a new way. The result of his quests was a greater genre diversity and extension of his theme. He wrote a number of works in a new style showing a deeper approach to social problems. Hence his realistic refined stories *Mahēś* and *Abhūgīr Swarga*. At the same time, a certain disconnectedness, inconsistency in elaborating his new artistic credo, led, at times, to the creation of rather weak works.

A special place in his works of this period was undoubtedly held by his novels *Pathēr Dābī* and *Śēṣ Praśna*.

*Pathēr Dābī* was the first political novel in Bengali literature. It was the direct result of Chattopadhyay's adherence to the national liberation struggle and his subsequent disenchantment in the methods of non-cooperation and *satyagraha*<sup>1</sup>. In it, an attempt was made to supply the answer to the question of how to achieve India's independence in correspondence with the moods of the more revolutionary part of the petty bourgeois intelligentsia.

The road to independence, according to the hero of the novel, Sabyasāchī (the 'Doctor'), lay in a revolution presupposing inevitable coercion. However, an analysis of this work leads us to conclude that neither the author nor his hero had a clear idea of how to engineer this revolution, and what changes would follow it. Moreover, Sabyasāchī divides the political and socio-economic aims of the revolution, accepting only the first.

In the novel, the driving forces of the revolution are the intelligentsia. At the same time, the writer stresses that only a few of its representatives can sacrifice all for the sake of the idea. According to Sabyasāchī's concept, the peasantry is incapable of heroism and self-sacrifice, and therefore cannot take part in the national liberation movement. Here we can see that the writer, disappointed with the tactics and results of the national liberation movement of 1918-1922, transferred his disappointment to the masses as well, doubting whether they could hold out long.

That a certain place is relegated to the working class in the novel is, no doubt, a reflection of the fact that the working class recovered sooner than the others from the defeat of the national liberation movement. Chattopadhyay was the first in Bengali literature to attempt to analyse the economic situation and the political role of the working class.

Comparing the chapters of the novel citing the life of the workers with M. Gorky's *Mother*, we find a certain coincidence of artistic vision. The scenes of poverty, moral depression, coarseness and hard drinking in it are akin to the description of life in the workers' district in *Mother*. Both novels show up the author's deep sympathy for the people whose lives were crippled by ruthless exploitation. The workers perceive the inhuman conditions of their life as something inevitable, and are wary of anything new and unusual, afraid that a strike may bring them nothing but suffering. Just as in Gorky's book, the enthusiasm and rightness of

<sup>1</sup> Passive resistance

those who called upon the workers to resist, to fight for their rights, kindle in the hearts of the people a timid spark of protest and faith in themselves.

The arguments used by Talwārākār in addressing the workers coincide with the ideas expressed by Andrei Nakhodka in Gorky's *Mother*.

These observations cause us to believe that Chattopadhyay was familiar with Gorky's novel, and this had definitely influenced him in his treatment of the subject of the working class.

The prototype of the conspiratorial organisation depicted by the writer was evidently the revolutionary terroristic society 'Ghaat'. But in a number of aspects, the views of the revolutionary-minded part of the 'extremist' underwent a change to suit the author's position. In distinction from the 'extremists', who accepted passive resistance as well, Chattopadhyay stresses that the only way to independence lies through coercive revolution. The hero of the novel categorically rejects individual terrorism as a form of struggle against the ruling administration. The Ghadrans relied on the support of the peasants and soldiers, whereas Chattopadhyaya transferred his attention to the workers.

In Sabyasāchī, the author strove to create what, in his opinion, is the ideal image of the revolutionary. He is endowed with a great many exceptional personal qualities. But the 'Doctor's activities and his organisation are not revealed to the reader. Though deeply devoted to the cause, the 'Doctor' is really alone and, therefore, weak, although the author fails to remark this, just as he fails to remark the fact that the weakness of the organisation is stipulated by the absence of a clear-cut programme, and also by the fact that it admits chance persons and builds its work on the revolutionary devotion of individuals. On a broader plane, its solitary nature is the result of the absence of strong ties with the masses.

*Pathēr Dābī* attracts attention first and foremost by dint of its political colouring. But it also treats of social aspects. The criticism of caste rule is here conducted from three angles: caste prejudices as a serious obstruction to personal happiness; as something contradicting the demands of modern life; and as an obstruction on the road to serving one's country.

The political and social significance of the novel can hardly be overrated.

An interesting artistic peculiarity of the novel consists in that its social problems are incarnated in images created by realistic means, and the political problems, in romantically uplifted albeit static images (with the exception of Talwārākār). The point is that in expressing his political views, the writer proceeded not from the reality he knew, but from his ideals or 'anti-ideals' (the images of Sabyasāchī, Sumitrā and Brajendra).

Noteworthy, also, is the fact that over a third of the novel lies beyond its seeming compositional termination. This part was necessary to the writer in order more clearly to express his views on the political problems. Everything is subordinated to this aim, and the action develops sluggishly. The artistic faults are obviously the result of the novelty of the genre, the absence of a corresponding tradition. And yet the writing of *Pathēr Dābī* was of enormous significance to the development of literature. The novel marked the beginning of the politicalisation of literature, paved the way to the political novel of the future.

The twenties was a time of active literary development in Bengal. The works of the young writers, at first united within the framework of the 'ati adhunik'<sup>1</sup> trend, served as the reason for literary polemics in which R. Tagore and S. Chattopadhyay took part from diverse positions. Not only because of their different world outlooks and aesthetic ideals, but also because already then the works of the 'young' contained the rudiments of different trends.

<sup>1</sup> ultra-modern

Tagore accented the 'impropriety' of replacing the ideal of beauty with ugliness, and Chattopadhyay stressed the innovatory and social role of the literature of the 'ati adhunik'. Actually, they spoke of the rudiments of different trends : modernism and progressive literature.

Both writers replied to this controversy with their work : Tagore with his novel *Śēṣ Kabitā*, and Chattopadhyay with his *Śēṣ Praśna*. The main problem of the latter novel was the possibility and practical feasibility of preserving, under modern conditions, the traditional, spiritual and ethical values. Formerly often holding a dual position in this question, the writer now replies to it in the sharp negative. This position is prompted by his deep concern for the welfare of his country.

The change in the views of Chattopadhyay on religion was evident in his *Pathēr Dāhī*, whose hero believes that religion engenders in men timidity and impotence, and obstructs the consolidation of the nation. In *Śēṣ Praśna*, the discrowning of the religious institutions became the leading theme. The writer depicted a heroine no longer the victim of conservatism as in his earlier works, but who actively fought against it. The moral code, free thinking and atheism of this woman were something entirely new, untypical of the times. That is probably why the author made her half-English, simultaneously stressing her Indian patriotism. Chattopadhyay endowed Kamal with broad erudition unusual in a woman of those days, and this enables her to conduct a controversy touching not only upon moral problems, but also on problems of the national life. In her arguments, she always wins out over her opponents. Presenting Kamal as a kind of ethical ideal, the writer likewise endowed her with a great many positive qualities.

Chattopadhyay accepted neither orthodox Hinduism, nor bourgeois ethics. No doubt, in Kamal he saw a kind of palliative of ethics modern in spirit, but without the vices of the European West.

Bearing the burden of ostracism meted to her by the society with dignity, Kamal finally wins out her dues, and at a time when she performs a most unorthodox act by entering into civil edlock with Ajit.

Under the influence of Kamal, many characters change their convictions to a greater or lesser degree. She triumphs with the aid of her intellect and force of character. Actually, however, the question of woman's assertion in society is uprooted from the range of characteristic conflicts in reality. Such are the consequences of the circumstance that the object of depiction in the novel is not life so much as the state of the mind.

Kamal's image is dually motivated—a contradiction typical of writers of educational realism who strove to depict the social milieu and its influence upon man, but simultaneously based the hero's conduct on 'reason'.

The novel also tries to show what the champion of independence ought to be like. Obviously, fearing that *Śēṣ Praśna* might experience the lot of *Pathēr Dāhī*, which was censured, Chattopadhyay wrote of this problem in a veiled way. The author's 'anti-ideal' is incarnated in the depiction of 'asram'. To this is opposed the somewhat mysterious image of the revolutionary Rājendra, a member of an underground organisation. The image of Rājendra, like that of Sabyasāchī, is insufficiently revealed in his actions. Striving to remedy this fault, the writer here too resorts to a characterisation of Rājendra through the opinions of the people around him, whose great respect he enjoys, regardless of whether they share his views or not, and stresses his outer likeness to Gōrā. It is noteworthy that the author places Rājendra higher than Kamal. His image contains the revolutionary spirit of the youth. The author wishes to stress their patriotism, courage, selflessness, to call upon them to be purposeful, resolute, organised



and disciplined in the cause of the struggle for independence. All these features are opposed to the qualities cultivated in the pupils of 'asram'.

It is interesting to note the close typological similarity between the characters of Rājendra and Rakhmetov, the hero of N. Chernyshevsky's novel *What Is To Be Done?*

In the concept of man, as it is disclosed in the novel, the evolution of Chattopadhyay's humanism is vividly manifested, since from pity and compassion for man he progresses in his works towards the assertion of the personality of a new type actively participating in the transformation of life.

From the viewpoint of its ideological content, the novel is an exceptional phenomenon. It should be appraised as the writer's civil exploit. At the same time, *Śēṣ Praśna* marks the development in Bengali literature of a new genre—the publicistic social-philosophical novel. The sources of the philosophically social novel undoubtedly lie in Tagore's *Gōrā*. But *Gōrā* has been based upon historical material while *Śēṣ Praśna*, the first work representing this genre, is entirely devoted to the problems of vital importance for the contemporaries.

Chattopadhyay studiously paid no attention to the development of the plot, and packed it with controversies. However, as a result, the dialogue, hardly reflecting the inner life of the characters, 'swallowed' the development of most of the characters, which renders them statical. All this, in the final analysis, is the result of posing too many problems. Nor is this a case apart in Indian literature.

In the novel, the peculiarities of educational and critical realism are interwoven. On the other hand, here, as in *Pathēr Dūhī*, the author uses the artistic methods of romanticism.

The application by critical realism of the artistic means of romanticism and educational realism is a phenomenon fully logical in a literature which took to the path of critical realism later than in the rest of the world, and developed fast. This phenomenon is stipulated by the incompleteness of the stages of romanticism and educational realism in the given literature, and the preservation of social-political conditions, whose reaction these artistic methods were.

Despite the existing opinion about the limitations of Chattopadhyay's creative diapason, he is, to my mind, a versatile writer who shows a sensitive reaction to the throbbing pulse of his time. His works of different periods reveal close ties with the awakening of Bengal's and all of India's national self-consciousness. His works enable one to understand the most important problems underlying the development of the Indian society.

Though a profoundly national writer, at the same time, as Tagore put it, "he has guided the Bengali novel nearer to the spirit of modern world literature." No small role in this was played by his acquaintance not only with West European, but also with Russian literature. Above I cited examples of Gorky's and possibly Chernyshevsky's influence on his work. To this should be added that he highly valued the work of the great Russian writer L. Tolstoy. Stressing in one of his articles the profoundly democratic nature of Russian literature, Chattopadhyay called upon Bengal's writers to use it as a sample:

"If the literature of this accursed, boundlessly suffering country.....manages, like Russian literature, to fuse with the troubles, joys and suffering of the layers of society lying at the very bottom of the social ladder, it will be able to hold a worthy place not only among the Indian literatures, but also among the literatures of the world."

# **Echoes From The Past**



The studies and views on Saratchandra appearing here are echoes from the past. These are by men of letters who were mostly contemporaries of the author. The sources of the essays are not easily accessible. The collection gives only a glimpse of the contemporary appreciation of the great genius of Saratchandra, the man and artist. It is presented here to acquaint the reader with the deep impact the author had made in his life-time on the eminent thinkers of this land.

These critical studies, while revealing the extent of recognition of Saratchandra's genius by stalwarts and scholars of those days, provide a telling contrast to the attempt made by a section of the present-day intellectuals to play it down.

The contents of this part are arranged in a chronological sequence. An English version accompanies each of the essays which were originally written in Bengali.

Dinesh Chandra Sen's *Sarat-Pratibhā* ( *The Genius of Saratchandra* ) was written when only the first few works of Saratchandra had appeared in print. The essay was published in the *Bharathaisa* in its Magh issue, 1323 B.S. (1917).

Manik Bandyopadhyay's study of *Śēṣ Praśna* appeared in an anthology entitled *Sarat-Bandanā* (ed. Natendra Dev) brought out to celebrate the fiftyseventh birthday of Saratchandra (1932). The novel *Śēṣ Praśna* had appeared only a year earlier, stirring up a literary debate in its wake.

Rabindranath Tagore read his address *To Saratchandra* on the occasion of the sixtyfirst birthday celebration of Saratchandra at a special ceremony of 'Rabibasar' at 'Prafulla-Kanan' in Beliaghata (Calcutta) on 25 Aswin, 1343 B.S.(1936). It was published in the Bichitra in its Agrahayan issue, 1343 B.S. (1936).

*An Original Genius* by Srikumar Banerjee appeared in the Amrita Bazar Patrika in its issue of January 17, 1938, the day following the death of Saratchandra.

*Conflict between Instinct and Ideal* by Subodh Chandra SenGupta appeared in the above-mentioned issue of the Amrita Bazar Patrika.

*The Great Message of Saratchandra* by Suniti Kumar Chatterji was published in the Hindusthan Standard in its issue of January 23, 1938.

Subhas Chandra Bose's homage was published in the Bharatbarsa in its Phalgun issue, 1344 B.S. (1938), under the title *Ādarśa Mānab Saratchandra (Saratchandra : The Ideal Man)*. The last paragraph printed here in the homage has been taken from the Presidential address delivered by Subhas Chandra at the Haripura Congress in Gujarat in 1938. This portion was published in the Chaitra issue of the Bharatbarsa, 1344 B.S. (1938).

Poet Nazrul Islam paid his homage in verse form to his great compatriot. It has been taken from *Saratchandrēr Jībanī Ō Sāhitya Bichār* by Ajit Kumar Ghosh.

Amrita Bazar Patrika and Hindusthan Standard are daily English newspapers published from Calcutta. Bharatbarsa and Bichitra are the titles of two Bengali monthlies.

# শরৎপ্রতিভা

দীনেশচন্দ্র সেন

প্রায় আট-নয় মাস পূর্বে শ্রীযুক্ত শরৎচন্দ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায় মহাশয়ের সঙ্গে আমার প্রথম আলাপ হয়। আমি সিনেট অফিসের সিঁড়ি দিয়া নামিতেছিলাম, তখন সুধীবাবু (শ্রীযুক্ত সুদীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর) ফুটপাথের উপর দাঁড়াইয়া একটি লোকের সঙ্গে কথা বলিতেছিলেন। আমাকে দেখিয়া সুধীবাবু দু-একটি কথা বলিয়া গেলেন : 'আপনি শবৎবাবুকে চেনেন না?' ইনি একজন ভালো ঔপন্যাসিক। আমি বলিলাম : 'ইহার লেখা পড়িয়াছি বলিয়া মনে হয় না। ইনি কী এই লিখিয়াছেন?' তখন সুধীবাবু ইহার রচিত কয়েকখানি বইয়ের নাম করিলেন। আমি তাহা একখানিও পড়ি নাই! আমি বলিলাম : 'ইনি তো আমাকে ইহার কোন বই দেন নাই।' সুধীবাবু বলিলেন : 'আমি দিলে কি আপনি পড়িলেন?' আমি কতকটা ভাঙ্ছিলোর সঙ্গে বলিলাম : 'ঠিক যে পড়ি, একথা বলিতে পারি না, তবে আপনি বই দিয়া দেখিতে পারেন।' বস্তুতঃ আমি মনে কবিতাখানি, অনাড়ম্বরবেশী শীর্ণকায় ভদ্রলোকটি এখনকার সাহিত্য বাঙ্গালার কোন সাধনা বাবসাদাব গম্পলেখক। সুধীবাবু তাহার সাক্ষাতে তাহার প্রশংসা করিয়া চলিত ভদ্রব্যবহারের পরিচয় দিয়াছেন মাত্র। আজকাল তো গম্পলেখক বঙ্গসাহিত্যের হাটেপথে। রংধুনি বামুনের হাতে যাহারা রন্ধনের কাজ ও চাকরানীর হাতে ঘরের অন্য-অন্য কাজ সমস্ত ছাড়িয়া দিয়া, উপাধান আশ্রয় করিয়া দিনরাত্রি নিষ্কর্মাভাবে কাটান, এইগুলি সেই নব্য সম্প্রদায়ের মহিলাদেরই মুখবোচক হয়।

উক্ত ঘটনার তিন চারি মাস পরে গুব্বাসবাবুর দোকান হইতে আমি কতকগুলি বই পাই। তাহা মধ্যে 'বিন্দুর ছেলে' নামক গম্পের বইখানি একদিন হঠাৎ শূন্য খেলার বশবর্তী হইয়া পড়িতে বসি 'বিন্দুর ছেলে' ও 'রামের স্মৃতি' এই দুটি গম্প পড়িয়া আমি যেন নূতন জগতে প্রবেশ করিলাম। চন্দ্রগুণি এমন স্পষ্ট মনে হইল, যেন তাহা সঙ্গীত হইয়া কথাবার্তা বলিতেছে। সাধারণতঃ গম্পলেখকেরা একপারিকর হইয়া দুই একমেব চরিত্র রচনা করেন—ভাল এবং মন্দ। যে ভাল তাহার গুণের শেষ নাই, যে মন্দ তাহার দোষের সীমা নাই। অত্যাচারী ক্রমাগত পড়িলে করিতেছে, সহিষ্ণু ক্রমাগত সহ্য করিতেছে। কবুণ রসের সৃষ্টি করিবার জন্য লেখকদের কেহ ভাসুকের দ্বারা দেবর-পক্ষীর চুলের মূর্তি ধরাইয়া তাহাকে ভিটা হইতে তাড়াইতেছে, ক্ষমারাগকাতর বিষবা তথ্যাপ সেই ভিটা আঁকড়াইয়া ধরিয়া স্বামীভক্তি পবাকষ্ঠা দেখাইতেছেন। কোন স্থানে দীনদাবিদ্র জেষ্ঠ্রভ্রাতা হাললাঙ্গল বন্ধক রাখিয়া কনিষ্ঠ ভ্রাতার পড়ার খরচ চালাইয়া তাহাকে উকিল তৈয়ারী করিতেছেন, পরে সেই কনিষ্ঠ ভ্রাতা স্বশ্রুবেব অর্থগীরবে এবং ওকালতির পশার জমাইয়া, চিরসহিষ্ণু দয়াময় জ্যেষ্ঠ ভ্রাতাকে পশুর মতো গৃহ হইতে বিতাড়িত করিয়া দিতেছে : বড়ভাই তখনও ছোটভাই-এর মঙ্গলকামনা করিতে ছাড়েন নাই। এইরূপ অত্যাচারের বর্ণনা পাঠকালে যে সত্যসত্যি কোন সময়ে চক্ষু জল না পড়ে, এমন কথা আমি বলি না। কিন্তু গ্রন্থকার যাহাকে ভাল করিয়া গড়িবেন, তাহার মুখে সাদামস্ত ঘষিয়া তাহাকে চকচকে করিয়া

দিবেন ; এবং যাহাকে খারাপ করিবেন ক্ষুর করিয়াছেন, তাহাকে কাল কালিতে ম্লান করাইয়া বানর বানাইয়া ছাড়িবেন, ইহাই তাহার প্রতিজ্ঞা । তাহা ছাড়া, কাণ্ডজ্ঞানহীন বর্ধরতাকে অনেক সময় ইহার কবুগুরসের প্রতিপোষক মনে করিয়া সাহিত্যিক কলাশিপ্পজ্ঞানের একান্ত অভাব দেখাইয়া থাকেন । একদা কোন একখানি প্রসিদ্ধ নাটকের অভিনয় দেখিতে গিয়া একটা দৃশ্য বড় সাংঘাতিক মনে হইল । ষ্টেজের উপর একটা ছেলেকে শোয়াইয়া তাহার খুল্লতাও বিষয় লোভে তাহাকে বিষ প্রয়োগ করিতেছেন ; জোর করিয়া তাহার মুখ বন্ধ করিয়া ধীরে ধীরে বিষ দেওয়া হইতেছে ; বালকটি তীব্র যন্ত্রণায় যতই হাত-পা ছুড়িতেছে, ততই দর্শকের দল বেজায় উত্তেজিত হইয়া উঠিতেছে । এইরূপ কবুগুরসের উদ্বেক করা কতকটা সহজ । যদি ষ্টেজের উপর কোন অভিনেতা বামি করিয়া বীভৎস রস প্রদর্শন করিতে চেষ্টা পান, তবে বোধ হয় এইরূপ সহজেই কৃতকার্য হইতে পারেন ।

কিন্তু সাহিত্যিক রসসৃষ্টির আইনকানুন অত মূল্যবান নহে । রক্তমাংসের মানুষ সৃষ্টি করিতে হইলে, তাহাকে দোষগুণে রচনা করিতে হয় ; তবেই তাহাকে আমাদের একজন বলিয়া চিনিতে পারি । রামচরিত্র অবশ্যই আদর্শ চরিত্র ; কিন্তু বাস্তবিক হাতে তিনি রক্তমাংসের মানুষ হইয়াছেন—মহাকবি নিশ্চয় পুতুল গাড়িতে চেষ্টা পান নাই । গৃহক ৮৩৩লের গৃহ ছাড়িয়া একরাশি তিনি একটা বড় গাছের শাখায় বাস করিয়াছিলেন । চারিদিকে সূচীভেদ্য অন্ধকার, পশুর গর্জন ; মনোরমা সীতা ঝটিকাদলিতা বঙ্গরীর ন্যায় তাঁহার কষ্টলগ্না, এমন সময় দুঃসহ কষ্টে কালসপের ন্যায় নিঃশ্বাস ফেলিয়া রামচন্দ্র লক্ষ্মণকে বলিলেন : “এমন কি কখনো শুনিয়াছ লক্ষ্মণ, যে কোন পিতা জগতে আমার মত ছন্দান্বর্তী পুত্রকে এইভাবে বর্জন করিতে পারে ? রাজা দশরথ একান্ত কাপুরুষ ও স্ত্রৈণ ; তুমি অযোধ্যায় ফিরিয়া যাও, নতুবা কৈকেয়ী নিশ্চয়ই আমার মাতাকে বিষ প্রয়োগে হত্যা করিবে ।” কৌশল্যা রামের বনগমন উপলক্ষে বলিয়াছিলেন : “কোমল উপাধানে শির রক্ষা করিয়া রামচন্দ্র শয়ন করিতে অভ্যস্ত, সে কেমন করিয়া তাহার লৌহ শাবলের মত দৃঢ় বাহু আশ্রয় করিয়া নিদ্রা লাভ করিবে ?” পাছে রামের চিত্র কঠোর হয় এই ভয়ে কুন্তিবাস এ সকল অংশ বাদ দিয়াছেন । লক্ষ্মণ বৃথিয়া উঠিয়া বলিয়াছিলেন : “হনিষ্যে পিতরং বৃদ্ধং কৈকেয়াসত্তমানস্ ।” একথা বাঙ্গলা রামায়ণে পৌছায় নাই । হনুমান রাবণকে প্রথমদিন দেখিয়া বলিয়াছিল : “কী গভীর রাজোচিত মূর্তি ! কি ধৈর্য ! কৌপীনধারী রামচন্দ্র ইহার সঙ্গে বিরোধ করিয়া কি করিবেন ?” সুতরাং বাস্তবিকরূপে রাম নিছক ভালোমানুষটি নহেন, এবং রাবণও নিছক দুশ্ট লোক নহে ।

বড় কবি ও লেখকেরা শাস্ত্র ধরিয়া কিংবা সামাজিক হিসাবে কী ভাল কী মন্দ তাহার একটা নিগূঢ় তত্ত্ব লইয়া চরিত্র গঠন করেন না । তাহাদের কল্পনা তাহাদিগকে এমন একটা জায়গায় লইয়া যায়, যেখানে সজীব বাস্তবতা চলাফেরা করে । কবি ও লেখক অতি স্পষ্টভাবে মনশ্চক্ষে যাহা দেখেন, তাহাই লেখনীমুখে প্রতিভাত হয় । আদর্শ আঁকবার চেষ্টা করিয়া কেহ কখনও খুব উচ্চ অঙ্গের গ্রন্থ রচনা করিতে পারেন নাই । সুখদুঃখে, আলোআঁধারে, দোষগুণে এই বিশ্ব ! ইহাতে যাহা উচ্চ ও বড়, তাহা কেবলই উচ্চ ও বড় নহে । হিমালয় পর্বতে এমন গহ্বর আছে, যাহা হইতে পাতাল পর্বত দেখা যায় ।

বহুদিন পরে বাংলা-সাহিত্যে শব্দবাবু গম্পে সজীব মানুষ দেখিলাম । দেখিলাম, বুদ্ধ সপিনীর ন্যায় স্বীলোকের হৃদয়ও কুসুম-সুসুমার হইতে পারে । ভ্রাতৃবধু ভাসুরকে কঠোর কথা বলিলে, সর্বদাই তিনি দীনহীন ভালোমানুষ সাজিয়া গবিভা ভ্রাতৃবধুর কৃপাপাত্র হইবার প্রত্যাশী নহেন, বড়মানুষ ভ্রাতার বাটীর পার্শ্বে কুটিরে খাঁকিয়া সারাদিন খাটিয়া প্রাণান্ত শ্রমে উপজীবিকা অর্জন করিতে পারেন । ইহার গম্পে পাড়ার সেরা বদমাইস ছেলেটার মত এমন কোমল চরিত্র বঙ্গসাহিত্যক্ষেত্রে নাই বলিলেও অত্যাধিক হয় না । শব্দবাবুর প্রধান চরিত্রগুলির অনেকের মধ্যে প্রধান দোষ আছে, তাহা স্বত্ত্বও তাহা লইয়া তাহারা শ্রেষ্ঠ । এমন যে সোনার পুতুল নারায়ণী, সেও স্নেহাঙ্ক এবং নিজের স্নেহপাত্র সন্ধ্যা দোষ দেখিতে অপটু । সু. কু. লইয়া তাহার ছবিগুলি আঁকিয়াছেন, তাহার কোনটিই এক রঙের হইয়া যায় নাই : দোষগুণে ঘেরূপ সংসার, শব্দবাবুর অশ্লীল চরিত্রগুলিরও সেইরূপ কোনদিকে আলো পাড়িয়া উজ্জল হইয়াছে, কোনদিকটা আঁধার হইয়া গিয়াছে । মোটের উপর, চরিত্রগুলির প্রত্যেকের দোষগুণে এমন একটা বিশেষত্ব আছে যে উহারা জীবন্ত মানুষের মতন হইয়াছে । লেখকের স্রদ্ধাভাষা এও বেশী যে, একান্ত কোপন, একান্ত অভিমানী ও কাণ্ডজ্ঞানহীন চরিত্রের ভিতরকার মাধুর্যের উৎসের তিনি সন্ধান করিয়াছেন । ইউজিন সু'ব মাদাম রজ এবং ভিক্টর হিউগোর নটারডামের কুজ বার্নের কুৎসিত হইয়াও ভিতরের সৌন্দর্যে অপূর্ণ হইয়াছেন । লেখকেরা ভিতর দেখাইয়াছেন বলিয়াই আমরা বাহিরের কুৎসিতও যে ভিতরে সুন্দর হইতে পারে, তাহা বুঝিয়াছি । ‘পণ্ডিতমশাই’ গম্পের নায়িকার মত অতবড় সাংসারিক-বুদ্ধিহীনা স্বীলোককে প্রধান নায়িকা করিয়া দেখান সহজ নহে । কিন্তু যে অন্তর্ধানী বিধাতা কুসুমের হৃদয়ের সন্ধান রাখেন, তিনি গম্পলেখকের হাতে ভিতরটা দেখিবার দেখাটবার চর্মবটা ছাড়িয়া দিয়াছেন । কুসুমের অভিমান, কুসুমের রাগ, তাহার অশ্রুতপূর্ব স্বামীপ্রেমের উপর দাঁড়াইয়া, সকল দোষের মধ্যে অপূর্ণ মাদকতার সৃষ্টি করিয়া দিয়াছে ।

আমরা দুর্দান্ত বালক রামের দোষগুলি পর্যন্ত ভালবাসিতে শিখিয়াছি। লেখকের প্রবল সহানুভূতি আমাদের টিকি ধরিয়া লইয়া এমন সকল জিনিষকে ভালবাসিতে শিখাইয়াছে, যাহা প্রথমতঃ একান্ত দোষের মনে হওয়া স্বাভাবিক। রাম যে তাহার দিদিমাকে ডাইনী বুড়ি বলিত, ডাক্তারের কলমের আমগাছগুলি কাটিয়া ফেলিলার ও তাহার বাড়িতে আগুন ধরাইবার ভয় দেখাইত, চুরি করিয়া গৃহস্থের শশা খাইত, এমনকি তাহার মাতৃসমা বৌদিদির চোখে পেয়ারা ছুড়িয়া মারিয়া ফুলাইয়া দিয়াছিল—এ সকল আমাদের চক্ষে, তাহার চরিত্রের অসামান্য স্নেহপ্রবণতার গুণে, মধুর বোধ হইতেছে। জননী যে গুণে ছেলের দোষ দেখিয়াও দেখেন না, তাহাকে ভাবের অমৃতে ডুবাইয়া রাখেন, শরৎবাবুর ভিতরে সেই গুণ, প্রীতি ও সহানুভূতি এত বেশী যে, তিনি পাঠ্যকেন চিত্র মাতৃদেয়ের ন্যায় সুকোমল করিয়া গড়িয়া ফেলেন। 'রামের স্মৃতি' গল্পটির মত সর্বাঙ্গসুন্দর মনোহর গল্প আমি বাংলা-সাহিত্যে পড়ি নাই। রাম তাহার ভ্রাতৃবধূকে ভালবাসিয়া তন্ময় হইয়া গিয়াছিল; ইহা সত্য যে, তাহার প্রকৃতির সমস্ত উদ্দাম উজ্জ্বলতা সেই ভালবাসায় পুষ্টিলাভ করিয়াছিল। কিন্তু যেদিন সেই স্নেহ হইতে বাণ্ডিত হইতে বসিয়াছিল, সেদিন যেন সংশয়ানুগ মোহ হইয়া গিয়াছিল। বউদিদিকে সে পেয়ারা ছুড়িয়া বাথা দিয়াছিল, এ কষ্ট তাহার রাখিবার জায়গা ছিল না। সে নিজের কপালে পেয়ারা ঠুকিয়া প্রাণিতে চেঁচা পাইতেছিল, সে আঘাতের পরিমাণ কত! সে নিজেকে বড় মিথ্যা সাধুনা দিবার প্রয়াস পাইয়াছিল, বারিগের নিম্নের তেজ বজায় রাখিবার জন্য কত বিফল চেষ্টা পাইয়াছিল; কিন্তু যেদিন বউদি তাহাকে ডাকেন নাই, খাইতে দেন নাই, সে দিন তাহার সমস্ত বালকপ্রকৃতি গ্রাসে শূকাইয়া উঠিয়াছিল; সে দিন তাহার উদ্দামভাব ভাঙ্গিয়া-চুরিয়া বেগ হইয়া গিয়াছিল। অত অস্পষ্ট স্নেহগায় এরূপ প্রবলভাবে কণ্ঠগরস সৃষ্টি করিতে বঙ্গীয় অন্য কোন আধুনিক লেখক পারিয়াছেন বলিয়া আমি জ্ঞান না।

প্রচলিত বাণিশাশি ছোটগল্পের কণ্ঠগরস 'রামের স্মৃতি' গল্পের তুলনায় সিক্ত নিকট বিন্দু। প্রকৃতঃ রামের সমস্ত দোষ আমরা জননীর চক্ষে মার্জনা করিয়া থাকি। নৈতিক হিসাবে উহারা যত বড়ই হউক না কেন, লেখক তাহা বন্দাবনের লীলাব ন্যায় মধুর করিয়া তুলিয়াছেন, সেখানে চুরি-মারামারি, মান-অভিমান-সকলই স্নেহের মূল্যে নিকাশিয়া গিয়াছে। নারায়ণী যেদিন সান্নিধ্য শপথ উপেক্ষা করিয়া বামের জন্য প্রাণিতে বসিল, সেদিন তাহার মূর্তি রাসফলের অন্তর তুলিয়ায় প্রাক্ষা ম্যাদোনা-মূর্তির ন্যায় আদর্শ মাতৃমূর্তি। সেই রামা, সেই পরিবেশনের কথা—চক্ষের জলে পড়া যায় না; প্রাণী মনোভাষ্য অক্ষয়চন্দ্র সবকান মহাশয়কে পড়িয়া শুনাইতেছিলাম : তিনি কাদিতে কাদিতে বলিলেন : 'আপনি আমার চক্ষুপিড়া বাড়াইয়া দিলেন।'

গল্পগুলির আর একটা বাহাদুরী এই, উহা আমাদের ফেনাইয়া লেখা হয় নাই। প্রাক্কাল বাগ্জে কথা, বিশেষ প্রকৃতিবর্ণনা, এত বেশী দেখা যায় যে উহা দ্বারা গল্পভাগ প্রায়ই উদ্দেশ্যপ্রস্তুত হইয়া পড়ে। শরৎবাবুর ভাষার সংযম আছে, সংযত দুই-একটি কথায় তাহার চরিত্রগুলির অন্তর্বর্ত্তম প্রদেহ পর্যন্ত দেখিতে পাওয়া যায়। অনেক সময় সাধারণ লেখকগণের কথার বাহুল্যে তাহাদের নামকনায়িকাগণের প্রকৃতি ঢাকা পড়ে মাত্র।

পূর্বেই লিখিয়াছি, সকল দিক দিয়া দেখিলে, 'রামের স্মৃতি' গল্পটি বোধ হয় লেখকের সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ গল্প। এই গল্পটি ক্ষুদ্র, কিন্তু ইহাতে এত ঘটনাবাহুল্য আছে যে, ইহার প্রত্যেক চিত্র একটি মহাকাব্যের অধ্যায়ের মত। রাম একপায়ে দাঁড়াইয়া রহিল, কিবুপে দাঁড়াইতে হয় তাহা তাহার পাঁচ বৎসরের ভ্রাতুষ্পুত্র গোবিন্দ শিখাইতে গেলে, তাহার গালে ঠাস করিয়া চড় মারিল, এই ব্যাপারে নারায়ণী একটু হাসিলেন। অস্থগগাছ উঠানের উপর রোপনকালে রামের অবিব্রাম আদেশ প্রদানে, গোবিন্দের ছোট একটি ঘটি করিয়া জল আনা, এক ডালের দিকে ইঙ্গিত করায় রামের সতর্ক করিয়া দেওয়া, কারণ আঙ্গুল দিয়া দেখাইলে গাছ বাড়িলে না, কানী গবুত ভয়ে বাঁশের বেড়া দেওয়া, কোথাও না রামের কাঠি দিয়া বেলের আটা খোঁচাইয়া বাহির করা এবং সেই ঘটনা শিশু ভ্রাতুষ্পুত্রের গভীরভাবে প্রত্যক্ষ করা, কখনও রামের কণ্ঠের দ্বারা পাণির খাচা প্রস্তুত করা, এ সকল ক্ষুদ্র ক্ষুদ্র ছবিতে যেন সমস্ত বাল্যলীলাব একটা জগৎ আমাদের চক্ষের সম্মুখে খুলিয়া গিয়াছে। এই শিশুলালার মধ্যে মাতৃবৃন্দা বউদিদির আদর-আদার ও বাহিরের শতপ্রকার অসহ্য গজনা যেন সমস্ত দৃশ্যটি স্নেহসারে অভিষিক্ত করিয়া রহিয়াছে। এই ক্ষুদ্রগল্পে লেখক সূক্ষ্মতুলি ধরিয়া যে সকল চরিত্র আঁকিয়াছেন, তাহা কখনগরের কারিগরের হাতের তৈয়ারি মাটির মূর্তির মত এক একটি ভিন্নপ্রকারের এবং প্রত্যেকটিই স্পষ্ট হইয়া উঠিয়াছে। অতি স্বাভাবিক বলিয়া তাহাদের গঠননৈপুণ্য আমাদের চক্ষু এড়াইতে পারে; কিন্তু একটু বিশ্লেষণ করিয়া দেখিলেই দেখা যাইবে, নিত্য দানী কিবুপ স্পষ্টবাদিনী; বহুদিন এক মনিবের সঙ্গে থাকায় গৃহের ধাতটি সম্বন্ধে তাহার কিবুপ অভিজ্ঞতা। ভোলা চাকর ছোট হইলেও কিবুপ প্রভুভক্ত, অনুগত এবং সখ্যভাবে আবদ্ধ। নারায়ণীর মাতার মতো চরিত্রের বঙ্গীয় গৃহে অভাব নাই; ইহাদের প্রভাব কত গৃহের শান্তি চিরতরে চলিয়া যাইতেছে। বড়ভাই গোলেচারী, কিন্তু তিনিও নিতান্ত ভালোমানুষটি নন; তাহার ভিতরেও দুই পদাশ্রয়



গ্রহণের প্রবৃত্তিটি বিলক্ষণ আছে; গিমির ভয়ে অনেক সময় সেই প্রবৃত্তিটি খেলা করিতে সাহস পায় নাই। এই সকল চরিত্রের আশেপাশে দুই-একটি ছোট চরিত্র উঁকি মারিতেছে; তাহারা লেখকের অবহেলার রেখাপাতেও বেন স্পষ্ট হইয়া উঠিয়াছে। ডাক্তারবাবুর সাক্ষ্য মান্য করিবার ভয়ে এক বৃদ্ধ রোগী বলিয়া উঠিয়াছিল: “উনি বাবু কি বলিয়াছেন, আমি ত তাহা শুনি নাই। কানের ভিতর কুইনাইনে ভৌ ভৌ করিতেছে।” এইরূপ দু-একটি কথায় পাড়গেয়ে ভীষ্মভাব গৃহস্থের ছবি অতি স্পষ্টভাবে চোখের সম্মুখে জাগিয়া উঠিয়াছে। এই বিচিত্র ঘটনা, চরিত্র ও পুঞ্জীভূত গৃহস্থালীত্ব চারিচরের মত নারায়ণী ও রামের বাৎসল্যকে মহীয়সী শোভা প্রদান করিয়াছে। বউদিদির শোক এবং সংযত বাক্যে আধ-প্রকাশিত সুগভীর মাতৃপ্রেম উজ্জল হইয়া উঠিয়াছে। সেই প্রেমের সংঘম কতদূর তাহা দুই-একটি ব্যবহার ও বাক্যে বুঝিতে পারা যায়: নারায়ণীকে তাঁহার মাতা যখন দুধ লইয়া খাইবার জন্য সাধাসাধি, অনুরোধ, ও গজনাশূলক বক্তৃতা করিতে লাগিলেন, নারায়ণী তখন দু-এক চুমুক দুধ খাইল। সাধারণ গল্প-লেখকেরা নিশ্চয়ই এই জায়গায় লিখিতেন, নারায়ণী কিছুতেই দুধ খাইতে রাজী হইল না। কিন্তু লেখক শুধু বলিলেন, নারায়ণীর কথা কাটাকাটি করিতে ভাল লাগে না, এজন্য তিনি দুধ খাইলেন; দুধ নিশ্চয় তাঁহার বিষের মত ঠেকিয়াছিল, তথাপি তাঁহাকে খাইতে হইয়াছিল, বিষ হইতে তিক্ত মায়ের কথার জ্বালা এড়াইতে। যখন রামের অবস্থা জ্ঞানিবার জন্য কোতূহলে মরিয়া যাইতেছিলেন, তখনও হৃদয়হীন মায়ের নিকট সেকথা শুনিলেন না, বাহাতে তাঁহার হৃদয় ভাঙিয়া যাইতেছিল সেই কথা দর্প করিয়া তাঁহার মাতা তাঁহার কানে বিজয়ভেরীর মতো বাজাইতে আঁসিয়াছিলেন। নারায়ণী তাঁহার প্রাণান্ত কোতূহল চাপিয়া রাখিয়া অনাদিক হইতে রামের সংবাদ জানিতে চেষ্টা পাইলেন। আধুনিক বঙ্গসাহিত্যে এতবড় সংঘম প্রায়ই দৃষ্ট হয় না। অথচ গভীরতম বাৎসল্যের ইহাই স্বভাব: শরৎবাবু অবহেলায় দু-একটি কথায় যেরূপ মনস্তত্ত্বের ইঙ্গিত দিয়াছেন, সুদীর্ঘ বর্ণনাতেও অনেক সময় তাহা পাওয়া যায় না।

‘রামের সুমতি’র শেষটি বড়ই স্বাভাবিক। পূর্বেই বলিয়াছি, রাম বউদিদির স্নেহের বলে এতবড় দুর্দান্ত হইয়া উঠিয়াছিল। সে কিছুতেই বউদিদির পর নহে। বউদিদির স্বামী তাহার বৈমাঠেই ভাই-বাহার পর: কিন্তু বউদিদি তাহার মাতৃসমা—তাঁহাকে ছাড়া সে জানে না, কিছুতেই তাঁহাকে সে পর ভাবিতে পারে না। বউদিদি বুড়া হইয়া মরিয়া যাইবে, একথাও তাহার অসহ্য। বউদিদির ছেনেটি তাহার নিভা-সহচর, তাহার একান্ত স্বেচ্ছাস্পদ, ‘আপনার’ বলিয়া এই চিরাগত বিশ্বাস যখন ভাঙিয়া গেল, তখন রাম একবারে কি একটা হইয়া গেল! ক্ষুদ্র একটা পুঁটলি লইয়া যখন সে অকূল সংসারের পাথ একক দাঁড়াইল এবং ভোলাকে দিয়া বউদিদির নিকট হইতে একটি টাকা পাথের চাহিল, তখনকার তাহার মূর্তি ও ডাক্তারের বাড়িতে কলমের আমের চালা কাটিবার ভয় দেখাইবার সময়কার মূর্তি—এই দুইটি মূর্তি সম্পূর্ণ পৃথক। এখনকার রাম আর সে রাম নাই; দু দিনের মধ্যে সে সম্পূর্ণ পৃথক হইয়া গিয়াছে, তাহার পায়ের নীচে যে জমি ছিল তাহা সঁরিয়া গিয়াছে—তাহার ভুল ভাঙিয়াছে। কিন্তু তাহাও তাহার বালা-প্রকৃতি একেবারে মুমূর্ষু হইয়া পড়িয়াছে। এই সময় নারায়ণী তাঁহার মাতাকে বিনীতভাবে স্বগৃহ হইতে বিদায় লইতে বলিলেন। রাম বলিল: “না, উনি থাকুন; আমি উঁহাকে আর উৎপাত করিব না, আমি ভাল হইয়াছি।” সুতরাং দিগম্বরী ঠাকুরাণীর থাকা না থাকা গল্পের উদ্দেশ্যের নিকট তুচ্ছ হইয়া পড়িল, রামের সুমতি হইল: অর্থাৎ তাহার লীলামধুর, দুর্দান্ত অথচ কোমল, আশ্রয়প্রাপ্ত অথচ একান্ত নির্ভরশীল, শিশু-প্রকৃতি ঘা খাইয়া গভীর হইয়া পড়িল। এখন দিগম্বরী তাহার প্রতি যত অত্যাচার করিবেন, মুখ ভেঙাইবেন ও শাপাস্ত করিবেন, সে-সকল নদী তরঙ্গে শৈল-কঠিন তীরভাগের ন্যায় সে নীরবে সহ্য করিবে, ইহা আমরা যখন বুঝলাম, তখন স্বাশুড়ী ঠাকুরাণীর থাকা না থাকায় আমাদের আর কোন কোতূহলসম্বন্ধ রহিল না। গল্প স্বাভাবিকভাবে এখানেই শেষ হইল। এই গল্পটি বাৎসল্যভাবের পরিণতি। সেই বাৎসল্য কত গভীর, তাহা যেদিন নারায়ণী তাহার মায়ের মুখে রামের মৃত্যুকামনার শাপ শুনিয়াছিলেন, তখন একবার ‘মা’ কথাটি রোষকম্পিত স্বরে উচ্চারণ করিয়া বুঝাইয়াছিলেন। মধুর ‘মা’ কথাটি সেদিন বেজেব শক্তি ধারণ করিয়া দিগম্বরীর অন্তরাগ্না কম্পিত করিয়া দিয়াছিল। বিনা বক্তৃতায়, অতি অল্প কথায় শরৎবাবু তাঁহার চরিত্রগুলি এইভাবে জীবন্ত করিতে পারিয়াছেন।

শরৎবাবু একটি তত্ত্ব বুঝাইয়াছেন—তাহা আমাদের নিকট বড় আশ্চর্য বোধ হইয়াছে। এটি বৈষ্ণব ধর্মের প্রধান ভাব: কিন্তু শরৎবাবু বৈষ্ণব শাস্ত্র হইতে তাহা পান নাই। ইহা তাঁহার হৃদয়ে স্বতঃই আত্মপ্রকাশ করিয়াছে। বড় রকমের স্নেহ শুধু রক্তমাংসের সম্পর্কজাত নহে, তাহা ভগবানের দান, তাঁহার ইচ্ছায় জন্মে। কোথায়ই বা উহার উৎপত্তি না হইতে পারে? শুধু মাতাই যে স্নেহের অধিকারিণী, তাহা নহে। একটি কালো ছেলে কোলে পাইয়া গর্ব, অভিমান ও রূপের মূর্তিস্বরূপ বিন্দু তাহাকে মায়ের

অপেক্ষা বেশী মেহ করিতে শিখিল ; মেহের গণী কতদূরে টানিতে হইবে, কুলজীশাস্ত্র হইতে আমরা তাহা নির্দেশ করিতে পারি। কেহ সে গণী অভিক্রম করিলে 'মায়ের চেয়ে যে বেশী ভালবাসে তাকে বলে ডাইন' প্রভৃতিরূপ কটুক্তি করিতে পারি। কিন্তু মনুষ্যপ্রকৃতির ক্ষেত্র অবাধ ; সে প্রকৃতির লীলা কোথায় থাকিবে, তাহা কে বলিতে পারে? আমাদের ভিতরে যে আত্মা আছেন, তিনি পরকে আপন করেন ও আপনকে পর করেন ; তিনি আইনকানুনের ধার ধারেন না। বৈষ্ণবেরা এই নিকাম প্রেমকে জড় নিয়মের বশবর্তী মনে করেন না ; রক্তের সংস্রবে যে মেহ হয়, উঁহা তাহা হইতে বড়। এই কথা বুঝাইতে—দেবকী হইতে যশোদার মাতৃভাব বেশী ফলাইয়া দেখাইয়াছেন। নন্দই আমাদের চক্ষে আদর্শ পিতা, বসুদেব নহেন ; অথচ ইঁহার কে? ইঁহার কৃষ্ণের কেহই নহেন। যখন প্রভাসে যাইয়া তাঁহার নিজেদের ভুল বুঝিলেন, তখন তাঁহার প্রাণ ছাড়িতে চাহিলেন, কৃষ্ণকে ছাড়িতে পারিলেন না। শরৎবাবু 'বিন্দুর ছেলে', 'রামের সুমতি', 'মেজদিদি' প্রভৃতি গল্পে পরকে আপন হইতেও আপন করিয়া দেখাইতেছেন। কোন মাতা, বিন্দু মঠ, নারায়ণীর মত মেহশীলা? অপার্থিব প্রেম কোন ক্ষুদ্র উপলক্ষে, কোন অনির্বচনীয় সূত্র আগ্রহ করিয়া হৃদয়ে সিংহাসন পাতিবে তাহা বলা যায় না। স্বামী হইতেও কেহ বেশী আত্মীয় হইতে পারে—এই তত্ত্বের উপর পরকীয় রস স্থাপিত ; মাতা হইতেও অধিকতর মেহশীলা হইতে পারেন—ইহাই আমরা শরৎবাবুর অঙ্কিত কয়েকটি চিত্রে দেখিতে পাই। বস্তুতঃ শাস্ত্রবিহিত বাঁধাঘাটে প্রেম ও মেহ সচরাচর বিচরণ করে বলিয়া মনে করিও না যে, উঁহার নিগড়নক। উঁহাদের প্রচ্ছন্দ গতিবিধি। কোন অনির্বচনীয় নিয়মে প্রেম কোথায় কাহার জীবনকে ধন্য করিতে উপস্থিত হয়, সেই নিগড় তত্ত্ব কেমন করিয়া বলা যাইতে পারে? মুক্ত আকাশ ও বায়ুর ন্যায় প্রেমের ক্ষেত্র অসীম ; উহা কোন দুয়ার দিয়া চন্দ্রকিরণের মত কাহার হৃদয় ছুঁইবে, কে বলিবে? মেহের এই অনির্বচনীয়ত্ব, এই গূঢ় গতিবিধি শরৎবাবুর লেখায় আমরা দেখিতে পাই। বৈষ্ণবদিগের মুখে এই সুব শুনিয়াছি বলিয়া উহা আমাদের কানে এত মিষ্টি লাগিয়াছে। আর একটি ভাব আমরা শরৎবাবুর লেখায় পাই। তাহা মেহের রাজ্যে আগন্তুকের দৌরাগোষ সাংঘাতিক ফল। একান্ত্রুস্ত পবিত্র যেখানে মেহমায়ার উপর দাঁড়াইয়া আছে, সেখানে শতদোষ সত্ত্বেও তাহা অনড়, অটল। রামের মত অশিষ্টতা এবং অনিবার্য দোষগুলি লইয়াও নারায়ণীর সংসার বেশ চলিতেছিল ; কিন্তু এত আঘাতেও যাহা নড়ে নাই, সহানুভূতিশূন্য আগন্তুকের নিঃশ্বাসে তাহা ভাঙিয়া পড়িলার মত হইল।

বিন্দু ও অন্নপূর্ণার ঋগড়বিবাদে যে গৃহে সর্বদা ঝড় বাহিত, তাহা এলোকেশীর আগমনে কিরূপ হইয়া গেল। এটি একটি নিত্যপরীক্ষিত সত্য যে, কোন পরিণামে যদি নৈতিক মহৎ অপরাধ না থাকে, তবে শতদোষ সত্ত্বেও তাহা শূন্য মমতার বন্ধনে স্থির হইয়া দাঁড়াইতে পারে ; কিন্তু আগন্তুকগণের অবাচিত আত্মীয়তা তাহা একদিনও স্থা করিতে পারে না। যে সকল ভাব অনভ্যস্ত, তাহার উপায়ে গৃহস্থালী চূর্ণবিচূর্ণ হইয়া ভাঙিয়া যায়। 'রামের সুমতি' ও 'বিন্দুর ছেলে' পড়িয়া পাঠক এই কথাটি বেশ বুঝিতে পারিবেন।

শরৎবাবুর 'চন্দ্রনাথ' উপন্যাসখানি বহু পূর্বের লেখা। যতই প্রবীণতা ও চুলের পক্কতা বাড়িয়া যায়, ততই যে লেখা উৎকৃষ্ট হয়, এ বিশ্বাস আমাদের নাই। 'চন্দ্রনাথ' পুস্তকের উপসংহারভাগ অতুলনীয়। একটি জ্ঞাতিক্রান্তা মেয়েকে শিক্ষিত ও ধনী যুবক চন্দ্রনাথ বিবাহ করিয়াছিলেন ; সরযু নিজের কুলকলঙ্ক জানিয়াও স্বামীর নিকট গোপন করিয়াছিলেন, কিন্তু দৈবদুর্বিপাকে তাহা বিবাহের কয়েক বৎসর পরে ধরা পড়িয়া গেল। তখন চন্দ্রনাথ ও সরযুর প্রেম গাঢ় হইয়াছে ; সরযু নিজ কুলকলঙ্কের কথা সর্বদা হৃদয়ে ঢাকিয়া রাখিয়া স্বামীর প্রতি ভালবাসা বাহিরে দেখাইতে ভয় পাইয়াছে। তাহার ভাসের ঘর কখন ভাঙিয়া যায়, সে ভয় তাহার সর্বদা ছিল। কিন্তু চন্দ্রনাথের সরল, অকপট প্রেম সরযুকে যথাসর্বস্ব জ্ঞান করিয়া তাহাকে ঘেন বুক করিয়া রাখিয়াছিল।

যখন একটা নিকট সত্য সম্পূর্ণ অপ্রত্যাশিতভাবে ধরা পড়িয়া গেল, তখন এই অবস্থায় সংসারে যতটা তোলপাড় হইবার কথা, ততটা হইল। নানা বিষমক অবস্থায় পড়িয়া চন্দ্রনাথ সরযুকে ত্যাগ করিতে বাধ্য হইলেন। কিন্তু বাহিরে যাহাকে ত্যাগ করিয়া কাশী পাঠাইয়া দিলেন, হৃদয় তাহার জন্য অবিরত কাদিতে লাগিল ; তিনি কেমন করিয়া বিরহী যক্ষের মত চারি বৎসর বাথায় কাটাইয়াছিলেন, তাহা শরৎবাবু সংযত কথায় জানাইয়াছেন। চন্দ্রনাথ সরযুর জন্য বাহিরে শোক প্রকাশ করেন নাই, কিন্তু অন্তরে পুড়িতেছিলেন। চারি বৎসর পবে একটা ব্যাগ হাতে করিয়া সাহেবী পোষাকে কাশীর অলগলি সন্ধান করিয়া চন্দ্রনাথ কৈলাস খাড়ার বাড়ীতে উপস্থিত হইলেন। সরযু অসহ্য মনঃকষ্টে শূকাইয়া কাঠ হইয়া গিয়াছিল। দাসীর মুখে শুনিল, তাহার ছেলেটিকে কোলে লইয়া বাহিরের ঘরে এক সাহেব পায়চারি করিতেছে। রান্না ফেলিয়া সরযু যাহা দেখিল, তাহাতে তাহার হৃদয়ের ভাব কি হইল, তাহা সহজেই বোঝা যাইতে পারে। চন্দ্রনাথ আর দৈর্ঘ্য রক্ষা করিতে না পারিয়া আসিয়াছিলেন, প্রবৃত্তির সঙ্গে যুদ্ধে পরাস্ত হইয়া আত্মসমর্পণ করিতে আসিয়াছিলেন। আর সরযুর পক্ষে 'স মিলন অপ্রত্যাশিত আনন্দের ও দুঃখের উৎস।' কিন্তু সরযুর এক ফোঁটা চোখের জল কেহ দেখিল না। সে স্বামীকে প্রণাম করিয়া বাড়ীর সকলের খবর জিজ্ঞাসা করিল। উপন্যাসকার

লিখিয়াছেন. সরযু রামধিল, বাড়িল, স্বামীর সঙ্গে কথা কহিল, যেন পূর্বে স্বামী বাড়ী আসিলে যেৰূপ হইত, এ তেমনই হইয়াছে; এতবড় ব্যাপার যে মথো ঘটিয়াছে-তাহা কিছুই বোঝা গেল না; কেবল চন্দ্রনাথের আসিতে সোঁদন যেন একটু দেৱী হইয়াছে এই মাত্র। এই শেষের কথাৰ মূল্য অনেক। ইহাতে লেখকের অসামান্য সাহিত্যিক বুদ্ধি ও মানব চরিত্রের সূক্ষ্ম জ্ঞান প্রদর্শিত হইয়াছে। কি প্রাণান্ত চেষ্টায় সরযু তাহার চিত্তসংযম রক্ষা করিয়াছিল, তাহা এই একটি ছত্রে প্রমাণিত হইতেছে, সংযমের বাঁধ একটু ভাঙিয়া চিত্তের উৎকণ্ঠা ও আশ্চর্যতা মুহূর্তের জন্য উছলিয়া পড়িতেছিল, এই ছত্রটি তাহাই বুঝাইতেছে। ঐ দেখ, আঘাতে আঘাতে সে বাঁধ ধীরে ধীরে টুটিয়া যাইতেছে। চাঁবি ফরাইয়া দিবার উপলক্ষে সরযু জানিতে চাহিল, নূতন বউকে চাঁবি দেওয়া হয় নাই কেন। সরযু ভাবিতেছিল, চন্দ্রনাথ আর এক পিবাছ করিয়াছেন; কিন্তু তাহার অন্তরের অন্তরতম দেশে স্বামীর প্রতি বিশ্বাস ছিল তিনি হয়ত পিবাছ করেন নাই। চন্দ্রনাথ ঠাট্টা করিয়া বলিল: “তাহাকেই দিয়াছি।” এই ঠাট্টা সরযুর পক্ষে মর্মান্তিক হইল; সে মুচ্ছিত হইয়া পড়িল। কিন্তু চন্দ্রনাথ তাহার মুচ্ছার কারণ বুঝিতে পারেন নাই; সংযতবাক্ সরযু এ পর্যন্ত তাহার চিত্তের ভাব যথাসাধ্য গোপন করিয়া আসিয়াছিল। মুচ্ছাভঙ্গের পর যখন চন্দ্রনাথ বলিল: “আমার এক স্ত্রী, সে পুরাতন হইয়াও আমার চক্ষে নিতাই নূতন!!” এই কথায় সরযু তাতে স্বর্গ পাইল: “স্বামী তাহাকে লইয়া আর ঘর করিবেন না, তথাপি তিনি আর পিবাছ করেন নাই, এই কৃতজ্ঞতায় সরযুর চিত্ত ভরপূৰ্ণ হইয়া গেল। তাহার পর চন্দ্রনাথ আহাৰ করিতে বসিয়াছেন। দু’প্রহরের সময়ে পাতে একরাশ লুচি দেখিয়া চন্দ্রনাথ সরযুকে অনুযোগ দিলেন: দিনের বেলায় তিনি যে লুচি খান না, ইহা কি সবস্মু ভুলিয়া গিয়াছে? সরযু কিছু না বলিয়া চক্ষে একবিন্দু অশ্রু সামলাইয়া লইয়া ভয়ে ভয়ে জিজ্ঞাসা করিল: “তুমি কি আমার হাতে খাইবে?” এই ব্যাপারে চন্দ্রনাথ আর ষেধ রাখিতে পারিলেন না: বলিলেন: “সরযু, দুপুর বোলা আমার চক্ষে জল না দেখিলে কি তোমার তৃপ্তি হইবে না?” তখন সরযু ভাত আনিয়া দিতেছে। বহু দুঃখ সহিয়া সে সংযমের বাঁধ রাখিয়াছিল, কিন্তু অতি সুখে আর পারিল না। সে উজ্জ্বল ঝালা হাতে করিয়া ভাল করিয়া কাঁদিবার জন্য রামাঘরে প্রবেশ করিল। শরতের রাতিতে সেৰূপ ফুলের পাপড়ির উপর ধীরে ধীরে নীহাৰ পশু ছানিয়া উঠে, এই মিলনচিত্রে সেইৰূপ করুণ রস ক্রমে ক্রমে ঘনীভূত হইয়া উঠিয়াছে। একসময়তোর কোন স্থানে এ ভাবের সংক্ষিপ্ত রচনা করুণ বসের এৰূপ অপৰ্যাপ্ত মূর্ত্ত পরিচয় আর পাই নাই।

গ্রন্থকারের আর একটি গুণ নানা বিরুদ্ধভাবাপন্ন চরিত্রের সৃষ্টি। মানুষ যে কত প্রকারে বিরুদ্ধ অবস্থাত্তে পরস্পরবিরোধী মনোভাব লইয়া কাজ করিতে পারে, তাহা শূন্য ‘পয়ী-সমাজ’-এর রম্য নহে, ‘পণ্ডিতমশাই’ গল্পে বুসুন চরিত্রেও বিশেষ রূপে দেখা যাইতেছে। রমা যাহার ভালবাসার জোনে প্রাণধারণ করিতেছিল, তাহার নামে মিথ্যা সাক্ষ্য দিয়া তাহাকেই জেলে পাঠাইল, এইৰূপ অসম্ভব ঘটনা কিরূপে ঘটিতে পারে, তাহা পাঠকগণ ‘পয়ী-সমাজ’ পড়িয়া বুঝিবেন। এৰূপ অবস্থাসংকট সৃষ্টি করিয়া নিগড় মনস্তত্ত্বের আভাস দিতে শরৎবাবু সিদ্ধহস্ত। বলাব চরিত্র দুর্দ্বাধ প্রতারণা বা অস্বাভাবিক হয় নাই। তিনি মিথ্যা সাক্ষ্যই দেন না প্রিয় ব্যক্তিকে জেলেই পাঠান, তাহার হৃদয় বৃষ্টিতে পাকের ঐশ্বৰ্য্যকালও বিলম্ব হয়না, এবং তাহা বুঝিয়া পাঠক কিছুতেই তাহার প্রতি প্রজ্ঞা হারাইতে পারেন না। ‘পণ্ডিতমশাই’ গল্পের কুসুম ষাটার ছায়া স্পর্শ করিতে পারিলে জীবনের সৰ্বাপেক্ষা কৃতার্থতা লাভ করে, তাহারই মাত্রার দস্ত সোনার বালা ফেবৎ পাঠাইয়া তাহার হৃদয় নিষ্ঠাভাবে ছিঁড়িয়া ফেলিতেছে-এই বিসদৃশ বিরুদ্ধ মনের ভাব ও নিচিট উপকরণেব রাশি লইয়া শরৎবাবুর প্রতিভা অসাধারণ কৃতিত্ব সহকারে একসময়তত্তে অপরূপ কয়েকখানি গ্রন্থ রচনা করিয়াছে। তাহার ‘শ্রীকান্তের ভ্রমণ কাহিনী’ শেষ হয় নাই: কিন্তু তাহার গোড়ায় যে অপরূপ প্রাকৃতিক দৃশ্যগুলির একের পর অপরের অবতারণা করিয়াছেন, তাহা কখনও নিঃসঙ্গ গহনে, খরপ্রোতা নদীর মুখে, বিদ্যাহ, মেঘ ও গোকুর সপের সহযোগে ভয়াবহ হইয়াছে, কোথাও বা ইন্দ্ৰের ‘রাম’-নামের উপর অগাধ বিশ্বাস ও বিপদে ভ্রক্ষেপহীন বীরের অত্যাঞ্জন করিম্মাণ্ডিত হইয়া উঠিয়াছে।

পুস্তকখানি শেষ হয় নাই, সুতরাং এ সম্বন্ধে আমরা আর মন্তব্য প্রকাশ করিব না। আমি শরৎবাবুর সকল বই পড়ি নাই; যাহা পড়িয়াছি, তাহা লইয়া এই সামান্য প্রবন্ধ লিখিলাম।

শরৎবাবুর ‘চরিত্রহীন’ উপন্যাসের খসড়া অনেকটা পড়িয়াছি, সমস্তটা পড়িবার সুযোগ হয় নাই; বোধহয় লেখাই হয় নাই। কিন্তু যতটা পড়িয়াছি, তাহাতে সান্বিতীর মত চরিত্র একসময়তত্তে একটা অপরূপ নূতন নক্সা বলিয়া মনে হইয়াছে। সান্বিতী ভদ্রলোকের মেয়ে হইয়াও গ্রন্থলেখণে পতিতাব ন্যায় সমাধে নিগূহীতা হইয়াছিল। তাহার বৃত্তান্ত শেষ পর্যন্ত জানি না: কিন্তু সে যে

১ পরে পুস্তককারে ‘শ্রীকান্ত প্রথম পর্বে’ নামে প্রকাশিত

নিষ্কলঙ্কা তাহা বুঝিতে বাকি নাই। তথাপি, লোকের চক্ষে যে সে কলঙ্কিতা, ইহা তাহার দূরদর্শনের ফল ছাড়া আর কি বলা যায়! কিন্তু সে বাহাকে প্রাণমন সমর্পণ করিল, তাহাকে তাহার নিজের অদৃষ্ট-বৈগুণ্যের ফলে কলঙ্কের আওতা হইতে রক্ষা করিবার জন্য সে যেরূপ ত্যাগ স্বীকার করিল, তদ্রূপভাবে ত্যাগ স্বীকার করিতে কে কবে পারিয়াছে? যখনই তাহার প্রণয়াকাকী সতীশ কোমল ভাব লইয়া তাহাকে পূজা করিতে আসিয়াছে, সে তখনই নিজেকে এতটা হেয় করিয়া দেখাইয়াছে, ও এমনই ভীক্ষু কথায় তাহাকে মর্মান্তিক কষ্ট দিয়াছে যে, সে পূজার ফুল ফেলিয়া দিয়া হৃদয়ে ঘৃণা ও বিদ্বেষ লইয়া ফিরিয়া গিয়াছে। সাবিত্রী তাহাই চায়। তাহার আরাধ্য দেবতা যে তাহার সহিত এক পংক্তিতে বসিয়া সামাজিক কলঙ্কের ভাগ লইবে, ইহা সে চাহে না, বাহাতে সে ঘৃণা করে, সে তাহাই চায়। এই ত্যাগই প্রকৃত প্রেম। বাহাকে লাভ করিলে সে শূণ্যের কিংবাকী কি দেবী হইতেও চাহিত না, তাহার সঙ্গে মিলনের পথে সে নিজের হাতে রচিত কাঁটার বেড়া দিয়া মনেমনে তৃপ্তিলাভ করিতেছে, প্রণয়ীর মনে এইরূপে ঘৃণা জাগাইয়া সে দুঃখে পুড়িয়া মরিতেছে। সে নিজে সমস্ত সুখের আশা বিসর্জন দিয়া, প্রিয়সঙ্গ হইতে নিজেকে ঠেকাইয়া রাখিতেছে। প্রণয়ীর সঙ্গলাভ করিয়া, কিম্বা শূণ্য সেই সঙ্গসুখের আশায় রমণীরা অনেকই সাহিতে পারেন, কিন্তু পাছে কোনরূপ লোকপ্রাণির নিঃশ্বাস তাহার প্রণয়ীর গায়ে লাগে, এই আশঙ্কায় কে কবে সাধ কারিয়া সাবিত্রীর মত সর্বত্যাগিনী, তপস্বিনী সাজিয়াছে? এই ত্যাগের ফলে তাহার জীবনের ফুল আশাকুসুমগুলি কবিতা পড়িতেছে, এবং সে মর্মান্তিক কষ্ট পাইতেছে। সাবিত্রী চরিত্রে ভোগের স্পৃহা নাই; প্রেমিককে ত্যাগ করিয়া সাবিত্রী প্রেমের মহিমা অতুলনীয় কবিতা দেখাইতেছে। এই প্রেমে অপর কোন সাধ নাই, সুখ নাই, প্রিয়ের শ্রেয়ই ইহার একমাত্র লক্ষ্য। ইহা সর্বসংসার ধরিয়া ন্যায় সকল দৃষ্টে বৃদ্ধ পাতিয়া নয়। যিনি আরাধ্য, তাঁহাকে নির্মল ও সর্ব আপদের বাহিরে রাখিবার জন্য পাইয়াও তাহাকে ছাড়িয়া দেয়। এই প্রেম চিন্তের গুপ্ত বৃন্দাবনের আরাধনা; ইহা বাসনার চিত্তানলে সতীদাহ। এই প্রেম ভোগবতী গঙ্গা। ইহা যিনি হৃদয়ের অন্তরতম প্রদেশে দেখিতে পারেন, তিনি বুঝিবেন। যে মুহূর্ত্তে প্রণয়ী আসিয়া নিজে ধরা দিতে চাহিতেছে, সে সময়ে কেন সাবিত্রী নিজের মুখে নিজে কার্ল মাথিয়া সতীশকে বিমুখ, তৃষ্ণ, এমন কি, অনুগ্রহ করিতেছে, কখনও বা সিন্ধু সতীশের মস্তকের সমস্ত উৎকট সিদ্ধান্তগুলিতে হৃদয়ের সায় দিয়া, ঈচ্ছা করিয়া কেন সে সতীশের হৃদয়ে আঁকা নিজের উজ্জল ছবি মলিন কবিতা ফেলিতেছে, সেই গুঢ় তত্ত্ব হৃদয় সাধারণ পাঠকের চক্ষু এড়াইয়া যাইতে পারে। সাবিত্রী চরিত্রের নিগূঢ় আত্মত্যাগ, নিজেকে লাঞ্ছিত করিয়া প্রণয়ীকে পবিত্রতাদান, স্বাভাবিক নিকট মানবত্ব করাই স্ত্রী জাতির সর্বোৎকর্ষ গৌরবের বিষয়, তাহার নিকট সাধ করিয়া নিজেকে অপমানিত করা—ছোট কবিতা, হেয় ও ঘৃণা করিয়া আঁকা, ইহা কত বড় প্রেমের দ্বারা সম্ভব হইয়াছে, তাহা পাঠকগণ পড়িয়া বুঝিতে পারিবেন। এই অসামান্য আত্মসংবরণের ক্ষমতা সাধারণ নায়িকায় বিরল। সাবিত্রী আয়েষার ন্যায় প্রেমের জনশ্রুতি বহুত্ব করে নাই, কুন্দনালিনীর ন্যায় নিজে নিরীহ হইয়াও সরলতার দ্বারা প্রিয়ের সংসার পোড়াইয়া ছারখার করে নাই; বিনোদিনীর মত প্রেমের উদ্দাম ও অশ্রুলাগী দেখায় নাই, এমন কি শরৎবাবু নিজের অঙ্কিত কুসুমের ন্যায় আত্মভিমানের দ্বারা প্রেমকে ঠেকাইয়া রাখে নাই, কিন্তু আত্মসংবরণ শক্তি তাহাকে অতুলনীয় গৌরবশ্রী দান করিয়াছে। চণ্ডীদাসের আত্মনিবেদনের কথায় তাহার হৃদয়ের ভাব বুঝান সাহিত্যে পাবে: “আমি নিজ সুখদুঃখ কিছু না জানি, তোমার কুশলে কুশল মানি।”

উপসংহারে, আমরা সাহিত্যক্ষেত্রে নববলদপ্ত, অসামান্য প্রতিভাশালী এই লেখকের অজ্ঞাথানে আনন্দ প্রকাশ করিতেছি। বাংলার আধুনিক লেখকগণের মধ্যে বাৎসল্যরস এ পর্যন্ত কেহ প্রচুররূপে দান করেন নাই, সকলেই দাম্পত্য ও স্বাধীন প্রেমের দীপাংশু লইয়া সাহিত্যমন্দিরে প্রবেশ করিয়াছেন। একমাত্র শরৎবাবু ‘তুটি’ গল্প ছাড়া রসটির উপাদেশ নিদর্শন আধুনিক সাহিত্যে বিরল ছিল। শরৎবাবু এই রস অপরিপাকরূপে ঢালিয়া দিয়া বঙ্গদেশের ঘরের ঘর অমৃত বহাইয়া দিয়াছেন।

# The genius of Saratchandra

Dinesh Chandra Sen

It was some eight or nine months ago that I struck up an acquaintance with Sri Saratchandra Chattopadhyay. I was coming down the stairs of the Senate House. On the nearby pavement stood Sudhi Babu (Sri Sudhindranath Thakur). He was engaged in conversation with somebody. As his eyes fell on me, he spared me a few words before venturing the question pointing to the person beside him : 'Don't you know this brilliant novelist Sarat Babu?' I said in retort. 'I don't remember having read any of his books. Could you name a few for me?' Sudhi Babu mentioned some titles, all equally unfamiliar to me. 'I'm yet to be favoured with complimentary copies', was my defensive reply. It was at this point that Sarat Babu broke in : 'Supposing I give you one, are you sure that you'll read it?' 'Can't swear, but you may take a chance, anyway', I returned in a derisive vein. In fact, I had half a feeling that the gentleman before me, modest in dress and thin in appearance, was just one of the contemporary publishers' hacks. Sudhi Babu's eulogy was, to my mind, prompted by common courtesy. Now-a-days story-writers are ubiquitous in the realm of Bengali literature. Their products are relished by ladies of the neo-aristocratic society who find it convenient to loll about in bed the clock round after leaving the domestic chores in the hands of the cook and the maid.

Three or four months after that chance meeting I got a gift packet of books from Gurudas Babu's publishing concern. One day I started reading just casually one of these which had the title *Bindur Chhēlē*. Two of these books—*Bindur Chhēlē* and *Rāmēr Sumati*—whisked me off, as it were, to a new universe. The characters seemed to be wonderfully alive and articulate. Writers are usually bent upon creating two kinds of characters—good and bad, endowed with countless merits and demerits respectively. A tyrant is always torturing and a meek sufferer is always tolerating the blows. There are writers who, in an attempt to fabricate pathos, make an elder brother evict his younger brother's widow from the ancestral homestead dragging her by the dishevelled locks, while the poor lady, a consumptive, desperately clings to her husband's abode in an overwhelming display of conjugal devotion. There are others who, with the same end in view, make an elder brother pawn his ploughshare to meet the expenses of educating

his younger brother for the legal profession, while the latter, in return, emboldened by an opulent father-in-law and his own roaring practice, drives out of home his ever-accommodating merciful benefactor, still prayerful for his welfare. It cannot, however, be said that such descriptions of high-handedness do not, at times, draw out a tear of real sympathy. But the authors seem determined on whitewashing the characters they propose to extol and black-dyeing those they plan to condemn. Moreover, their tendency to portray senseless barbarity as a nourisher of pathos betrays extreme ignorance of literary art. Once I went to see a famous play. A particular scene struck me as horrid. A boy was laid flat on the stage. His uncle, coveting his property, was poisoning him to death. He had gagged the boy's mouth and was parting his lips from time to time in order to pour the drug in his mouth. The boy's agonised convulsions were adding to the excitement of the spectators. It is rather easy to dish out such pathetic stuff. Perhaps in the same way an actor, actually vomiting on the stage by way of producing a grotesque effect, can easily win the day.

But the canons of creative art are not that vulgar. To depict a character to the life it is necessary to temper vices with virtues. It is then only that we can recognise it as one of us. Rāma is, of course, an ideal hero; but Valmiki has endowed him with qualities universal to flesh and blood. The great epic poet did not certainly try to create an idol. After leaving the house of Guhak, he spent a night on the branch of a large tree. All around it was impenetrably dark, wild beasts were howling. He held his beautiful spouse Sītā to his bosom in a warm embrace like a tree supporting a wind-swept creeper. All on a sudden, smarting with unbearable pain like a black cobra, Rāmachandra heaved a sigh and said to Lakṣmaṇa: "Have you ever heard of a father forsaking an ever-obedient son like me in this manner? King Daśaratha is a henpecked coward, to be sure. You'd better be starting back for Ayodhya or else, Kaikēyī is sure to poison my mother to death." On the eve of Rāma's forest-exile Kauśalyā remarked: "Rāmachandra is accustomed to snuggling down in bed resting his head on a soft pillow. How can he go to sleep with his head propped up on his arm as hard as an iron bar?" Krittibas (in his Bengali version of the original Sanskrit) has omitted these portions lest Rāma should appear harsh. Lakṣmaṇa's angry outburst, "Haniṣyē pitaraṁ byddhan Kaikēyyāsaktamānasam<sup>1</sup>" does not echo in the Bengali version. Hanumān's first impression of Rāvaṇa is thus summed up by Valmiki: "What a solemn and majestic appearance! How can Rāma, of all persons, challenge him to fight?" So the Rāma of Valmiki is not just a goody-goody type, nor is Rāvaṇa an out-and-out scoundrel.

Great poets and writers do not create their characters according to scriptural injunctions or any predetermined code of social conduct. Their imagination elevates them to a realm where they can give shape to life-like characters. Whatever they visualize vividly are reflected in their works. A conscious effort at portraying the ideal has seldom resulted in a production of high literary worth. This world is compounded of weal and woe, light and darkness, merits and demerits. Here we cannot think either of eminence or of nobility in absolute terms. In the Himalayas there are caves deep enough to afford a glimpse of the core of the earth.

Saratchandra has filled a long-felt want in Bengali literature by introducing us to real life characters in his fiction. A woman as dangerous as an infuriated snake may possess flowerlike tenderness of heart. An elder brother remains his original modest and generous self even when the younger brother's wife comes out with a long tongue to vilify him—not for a moment does he crave the mercy of the insolent woman. He may even go to the extent of living in a cottage beside his rich brother's house and work hard to keep body and soul together. The young mischief-monger

<sup>1</sup> I will kill our old father who is blindly attached to Kaikēyī

of the village is also a rare specimen of tender-heartedness—unparalleled, one might say, in Bengali literature. Some of his prominent characters have prominent blemishes; still they possess elements of greatness. Even a golden character like Nārāyaṇī is affectionate to a fault and winks at the lapses of the object of her affection. The writer has drawn her pictures mingling the good as also the bad in her, none of these coming out in a single dull colour. Just as the human world is a variegated pattern of virtues and blemishes, the characters depicted by him are similarly illumined in some aspects and darkened in others. On the whole, their strong and weak points mingle in a peculiar way to stamp each as a unique and full-blooded personality. So intense is the writer's compassion that he has traced the hidden springs of affability even in characters obviously ill-tempered, sulky and senseless. Eugene Sue's Madame Rongé and Victor Hugo's Hunchback of Notre Dame are exquisite creations because of their inner graces despite a repulsive exterior. It is because such writers have shown us the innermost recesses of the human heart that we have come to realise that beauty may reside in apparent ugliness. To present a woman entirely devoid of worldly wisdom as the heroine is not quite easy for a novelist. But in the case of Kusum in *Paṇḍit Maśāi* the omniscient God who has full knowledge of her heart seems Himself to have empowered the novelist to unlock it for intimate observation and accurate portrayal of its splendour. Kusum's sulkiness and fits of anger, broadbased on unheard-of love for husband have permeated all her lapses with an intoxicating charm. We have learnt to love even the mischievous propensities of the indomitable boy-hero Rām. The overpowering sympathy of the writer has forcibly compelled us to love some such things as may naturally appear blameworthy at first sight. Rām nicknamed his granny 'Witch'; threatened to cut down the grafted mango saplings of the doctor's garden and to set fire to his house; gorged himself with cucumbers stolen from neighbours' orchards; and, to crown all, pelted a guava at his elder (step)-brother's wife, a mother unto him, so as to make her suffer from a swollen eye. But all these misdeeds, mellowed by the writer's extraordinary affection, appear graceful to us. Saratchandra possesses, in a great measure, the cardinal virtues of love and sympathy—virtues which lead a mother to ignore her child's faults and to preserve him in the nectar of tender emotions. As a result, he imparts a sort of motherly tenderness to a reader's heart and remoulds his attitude. I am yet to read a Bengali story so delightfully perfect as *Rāmēr Sumati*. Rām lost himself in his affection towards his (step)-brother's wife, although it was the very same affection that fostered all the waywardness of his nature. I do not know of any other present-day Bengali writer giving artistic vent to such intense pathos. The pathos inherent in innumerable contemporary short stories pales into insignificance before that of *Rāmēr Sumati*. In point of fact, we treat all the shortcomings of Rām with the leniency of a mother's judgement. Whatever their ethical implications, the writer has invested them all with a sweetness native to the Vaishnava idea of Kṛṣṇa's Brindaban episode where all the baser instincts have been bargained away for love. The figure of Nārāyaṇī cooking the meal for Rām to the neglect of her husband's pledge is lit up by flashes of ideal motherhood like Raphael's 'Madonna'. One cannot read the relevant portion describing the preparation and offering of the meal without shedding tears. I was reading it out to the veteran critic Akshaychandra Sarkar. He remarked with tearful eyes: 'You've aggravated my eye-trouble.'

Another creditable feature of his stories is that they are totally free of prolixity. Now-a-days stories abound in digressions, especially nature-descriptions, blunting the real purpose of the story element. Saratchandra's language is marked by restraint; a few deft and pithy touches reveal the inmost depth of his characters. The verbosity of ordinary writers often obscures the traits of their chief characters.

*Rāmēr Sumati*, as I have already said, is probably the best of Saratchandra's stories. In a small

compass it contains a multitude of events each with the singularity of the canto of an epic. Rām stood on balancing himself on one leg ; but when his cousin Gōbinda proposed to teach him the feat he was rewarded with a smart slap on the face. Nārāyaṇī smiled at the scene. Rām lectured incessantly while planting the banyan sapling in the courtyard ; Gōbinda fetched a bowl of water and pointed to a branch ; Rām was quick enough to warn him against such gestures because they would stunt the growth of the tree. Rām fenced the sapling to ward off Kālī, the mischievous cow. His little cousin watched Rām extract glue from *bael*<sup>1</sup> pulp with the help of a broomstick. Rām was busy making a bird's cage with slender bamboo strips. All such thumb-nail sketches open before our wondrous gaze golden vistas of the world of boyhood. Overtopping all the boyish performances is the presence of the ever-indulgent 'bauidi' (Nārāyaṇī) suffering for his sake myriads of rebukes while raining the genial influence of her affection on all affairs. All the characters in this short narrative are portrayed with delicate touches, each different from the other but all equally prominent like the clay idols made by the famous artisans of Krishnanagar. But they are so very natural that we are often unmindful of the skill that goes into their making. A brief analysis will make it clear. Nitya, the maid, is outspoken to a degree ; she knows the ins and outs of the household where she has completed a long career. The little servant Bhōlā, though of tender age, is attached to his master by indissoluble ties of faithfulness, devotion and friendship. Nārāyaṇī's mother is a familiar type in Bengali households for ever playing the role of a peace-breaker. Docile as he is, the elder (step) brother, is very much inclined to lend his ears to evil counsel—only a lurking fear of his wife holds that instinct in check.

And peeping out from behind such principal figures are a few minor characters no less vivid even by casual touches. Lest he should be called upon to give witness on behalf of the doctor, an old patient blurts out : "I haven't heard his statement. My ears are buzzing, thanks to a heavy dose of quinine." Thus in a word or two a timid rustic is clearly brought into our view. All such strange episodes and characters together with an accumulation of domestic details have a kaleidoscopic quality and invest the filial attachment between Nārāyaṇī and Rām with superb grace. Her grief-stricken, measured utterances shed a peculiar lustre on her deep motherly affection. How very restrained that affection is can be exemplified by referring to some of her occasional gestures and remarks. When Nārāyaṇī's mother brought her some milk and began to coax and cajole and finally pester her with a diatribe in order to make her drink it, she obliged her with a sip or two. At this point lesser writers would have embellished the narrative with Nārāyaṇī's protestations. But the author simply said that Nārāyaṇī was not in the mood for bandying words and so she sipped off the milk. She found the milk bitter to the taste like poison, no doubt, but she had to drink it only to get rid of the sting of her mother's remarks which were still more bitter. Even when she was dying for a bit of news about Rām, she did not accept the report of her merciless mother who had vengefully come to sound her, with a flourish of trumpets, as it were, about the wretched condition of Rām which had all the while been gnawing at her heart. On the other hand, Nārāyaṇī concealed her overwhelming curiosity and tried to gather information about Rām from different sources. In contemporary Bengali literature such artistic restraint is rare. But this is exactly how the deepest filial affection works itself out and Saratchandra has dealt with this psychological aspect with a few, almost negligent, touches—a feat often impossible to achieve even by means of detailed description.

The story *Rāmēr Sumati* is rounded off with an extremely natural conclusion. As I have already said, Nārāyaṇī's affection emboldened Rām to act the lord everywhere. He always looked upon her as his own, while disowning her husband who was a step-brother to him. Nārāyaṇī was a

<sup>1</sup> A fruit with a hard outer crust and glutinous pulp



mother unto her and he could think of nothing else. It was just beyond him to regard her as belonging to a different family. That she would grow old and die was an outrageous suggestion to him. Her own son was his constant companion whom he dearly loved. When his long-cherished idea of such a vital bond of kinship crumbled, Rām became quite other than he was. The boy who, being called upon to fend for himself with the only possession of the small bundle of his belongings, sent Bhōlā to ask Nārāyaṇī for a rupee for incidental expenses and the boy who had threatened to cut down the grafted mango sapling in the doctor's orchard are cast in different moulds altogether. The later Rām was not even a shadow of his earlier self. A great change came over him almost overnight. He lost his footing and his disillusionment was complete. But all this sapped the vital essence of his boyhood nature. It was at this crucial moment that Nārāyaṇī humbly begged of her mother to quit her household. Rām now hastened to request Nārāyaṇī to let the old lady stay on. He also promised not to pester her any more. Finally he gave Nārāyaṇī a definite assurance that he had become a good boy. So, from now on, it became irrelevant to the purpose of the narrative whether she would prolong her stay or not. Good sense at last dawned on Rām. That is to say, the child in him, ever so sweet in his pranks and at once so indomitable and tender-hearted, with his whims curtailed and yet totally dependent on others was shocked into a sombre calm. Henceforward, like the rocky bank of a river resisting the rush of waves, he would put with all the petty tyrannies of Digambarī including taunting, facial gestures and cursing. When this becomes clear to us we are no longer interested in the matter of Digambarī's presence in the family. And the story here reaches its natural conclusion in the culmination of filial love. When, on hearing her mother call down fatal curses on Rām, Nārāyaṇī uttered the single word 'Ma!', her deep-toned voice, trembling with genuine wrath, testified the profundity of this filial love. The inherent charm of the word 'Ma' was converted into the fury of thunder and set the heart of Digambarī a-quiver with terror. In this way, Saratchandra has succeeded in animating his characters with a marvellous economy of expression.

Saratchandra has illustrated a theme which has struck me as wonderful. It happens to be the quintessence of Vaishnava religion; but he has not derived it from Vaishnava scriptures. Rather it has manifested itself spontaneously in his heart. Briefly, the theme may be stated as follows. Great affection does not spring from blood-relation alone. It is a gift of God and He creates it at will. It can take root anywhere. Mother is not the sole possessor of affection. Bindu, who was an embodiment of vanity, touchiness and beauty, proved herself more than a mother into a dark skinned child nestling closely to her bosom. Conventional ethics of family relations may direct us to draw the line in matters of affection, and anybody transgressing it may earn our opprobrium as a witch trying to outdo the mother herself. But human nature has an unrestricted range, there is no knowing where it will stop disporting itself. The Soul that resides in us makes next of kin of strangers and strangers of next of kin without regard for prescribed laws. According to the Vaishnavas, this motiveless love is not subjected to material conditions and is far greater than the love that is dependent on blood-relations. As an illustration of this truth Jaśōdā's motherly feelings have been shown as richer than those of Dēbakī. It is Nanda whom we regard as an ideal father and not Bāsudēh; but who are they really? They are no relation of Kṛṣṇa. At Pravāṣ they both realised their mistakes and wanted to give up their own lives rather than go without Śrīkṛṣṇa. In his *Bindu Chhēlē*, *Rāmē Sumati*, *Mējdidi* and other stories Saratchandra has shown us how persons not to be counted among immediate relations come to be esteemed as nearer than the nearest ones. Is there any mother as affectionate as Bindu or Nārāyaṇī? It is anybody's guess how, on what trivial occasion, and through what unpredictable medium the heavenly emotion of love will entrench itself in the heart. The literary theme of extra-marital love (*parakiya rasa*) stems from the notion that a married woman may hold somebody else nearer to her heart than her own husband. And in Saratchandra we come across women outdoing

real mothers in filial affection. In fact, it should not be supposed that love and affection are fettered by custom though they usually manifest themselves in the customary way. They run their own unrestricted course; where love will bring its blessings to sanctify a life and what unique principle it will follow is a deep mystery incapable of solution. Like the air and the open sky, love holds its supreme sway over a limitless region; through what secret opening its balmy influence will enter a human heart like moonbeam nobody can say. And filial love in all its inscrutability and subterranean movement finds marvellous expression in Saratchandra. Since it is in tune with the Vaishnava ideal, it sounds so enchantingly sweet to us.

We come across another theme in Saratchandra : how a family, an abode of affection, is upset by the machinations of unwelcome sojourners. A joint family, as long as it is based on the edifice of mutual affection and goodwill, maintains its stability in spite of numerous shortcomings. Nārāyaṇī faced no trouble in running her household despite the pranks and rather incurable lapses of Rām. The family withstood all the resultant jolts and jerks firmly. But the arrival of a heartless sojourner threatened to blast it. The household that was always swept by the stormy quarrels of Bindu and Annapūrnā wore a strange look after Elōkēśī made her appearance. It is a time-honoured truth that a family, as long as it is untarnished by any grave moral offence, can hold together with all sorts of shortcomings on the sheer strength of the bond of affection ; but it cannot, even for a single day, brook the uncalled-for gestures of intimacy of unwanted sojourners. The entire household then crumbles under the weight of superimposed unaccustomed dealings. The readers of *Rāmē Sumati* and *Bindur Chhēlē* will at once realise this.

The novel *Chandranāth* was one of Saratchandra's early productions. We do not subscribe to the belief that the art of writing improves with the advancement of age and the greying of hair. The concluding portion of *Chandranāth* is excellent beyond compare. The hero of this novel, a rich and educated youth named Chandranāth, married an outcast girl Sarayū. Despite being aware of her family scandal, Sarayū concealed it from Chandranāth. But unfortunately the matter came to light a few years after their marriage. By that time their love had matured. Sarayū had all the time harboured the thoughts of her low lineage and the effort made her hesitant about demonstrating her love towards her husband. She had a lurking fear that the discovery might make their union collapse like a house of cards. But Chandranāth, on his part, regarded her as the be-all and the end-all of his life and held her close to his heart in a bond of simple, sincere and all-embracing love.

When the awful truth emerged most unexpectedly, the turmoil that was then inevitable took place to its natural extent. Faced with the adverse circumstances, Chandranāth was forced to give up Sarayū. But his heart wept on unceasingly for the one whom he had apparently given up and sent to Kashi. Saratchandra has shown with restraint how he spent the length of four years in deep agony like Yakṣa<sup>1</sup> estranged from his beloved. Outwardly, Chandranāth gave no expression of his sorrow for Sarayū, but, nevertheless, burnt within. At the end of four years, Chandranāth, with a bag in hand and in the dress of a sahib, arrived at the house of uncle Kailās after much searching in the lanes and by-lanes of Kashi. Suffering unbearable agony all this while, Sarayū had been emaciated enough to resemble a sapless wood. She now heard from her maid that a sahib was walking about in the outer room with her child in his arms. It can well be imagined what Sarayū felt in her heart at what she saw when she hurried out of the kitchen. Chandranāth had come at last, unable to contain himself any more ; he had come to yield after losing a war with instinct. For Sarayū, on the other hand, this union was the source of un contemplated happiness and pain. But not a drop of tear was visible in her eyes. She bowed to her husband and wanted to know about those at home. The novelist

<sup>1</sup> A character in Kalidasa's *Mēghdūtam*.

has written : "Sarayū cooked, served and talked to her husband as she had done in the past when he returned home. Not an inkling was discernible of such a major event as had happened meanwhile. The only difference seemed to be that Chandranāth had come rather late for home that day." This last remark counts for much. It reveals the novelist's rare literary acumen and subtle understanding of the human character. This single line amply demonstrates what a desperate effort it had cost Sarayū to restrain her feelings. It shows how her impatient concern was spilling over for a moment, though bursting the barrier of her restraint. The reader is invited to behold how the barrier slowly crumbles down as a result of repeated shocks. When she was returned the key, Sarayū wanted to know why it was not given to the new bride. She thought Chandranāth had married once again. But in the remotest corner of her heart she had the faith in her husband that he would not possibly marry again. Chandranāth replied in a humorous vein : "Of course I have given it to her." The humour was heart-rending for Sarayū ; she fainted. But Chandranāth could not guess at all the cause of her fainting as Sarayū with her habitual reserve had done her best till now to hide her feelings. After she had regained consciousness, Chandranāth said to her : "I have only one wife ; and even with the passing of time, she appears new as ever to me." At this, Sarayū seemed to regain her paradise. Her heart overflowed with gratitude at the thought that though her husband would not begin life with her anew, he at least had not married again. Chandranāth then sat down to lunch. Finding a heap of 'luchi'<sup>1</sup> on the dish before him at noon, he queried in a mildly protesting tone whether Sarayū had forgotten that he was not used to taking 'luchis' at daytime. Without a reply, Sarayū struggled to hide a drop of tear welling up in her eye and asked timidly : "Will you eat the food cooked by me?" This was too much for Chandranāth and, unable to control himself any more, he replied : "Sarayū, won't you be satisfied until you see me weep at this time of the day?" Then Sarayū brought him rice. Amidst prolonged suffering she had so far somehow managed to keep up restraint. But now her happiness was too overwhelming for her to contain herself any longer. With the emptied dish in hand, she entered the kitchen to have her cry out. Just as on a clear night in autumn dew drops slowly gather on the petals of a flower, a note of pathos has likewise deepened gradually in this picture of union. I have never again found in any other piece of Bengali literature such an exuberant treatment of pathos within the scope of such a brief write-up.

Another great quality of the writer is his masterly creation of a galaxy of heterogeneous characters. We see in his writings how man, thrown into the vortex of adverse circumstances, can go about with a mind divided within itself. It is manifest not only in Ramā of *Pallī-Samāj* but also in Kusum of *Paṇḍit Maśāi* in a particular form. Ramā falsely testified against the very person on the strength of whose love she had managed to keep alive and sent him to prison. Readers going through *Pallī-Samāj* will understand how this impossible thing could happen. Saratchandra is a master at creating such situations loaded with crisis and hinting at the deeply complex psychological phenomena. Ramā's character has not become incomprehensible or misty or unnatural. Despite her bearing false witness and sending her beloved one to prison, readers do not take even a moment to understand her true self and with that understanding they cannot afford to forgo respect for her. In the story *Paṇḍit Maśāi*, Kusum who would deem it her greatest attainment in life just to be able to touch the shadow of Bṛndāban sends back the gold bangle given to her by Bṛndāban's mother, and thus cruelly wounds his heart. By presenting such incongruous and contradictory workings of the mind and using other diverse ingredients, Saratchandra, with his rare talent, has brought out, to his extra-

<sup>1</sup> 'Luchi' is a typically Indian delicacy made of kneaded flour fried in boiling fat

ordinary credit, some of the finest novels in Bengali literature. His *Śrikāntēr Bhraman Kāhinī*<sup>1</sup> is not yet complete, but the exquisite scenes of nature he has described towards the beginning of the novel are at places awe-inspiring—as in the midst of deepening sylvan solitude or at the mouth of a turbulent river or with the accompaniment of the dark nimbus, lightning and the hideous viper, while at times again such scenes have been stuffed with poetic beauty, as when he portrays Indra as chanting in deep faith the sacred name of Rāma and braving dangers with perfect nonchalance.

The novel is not yet complete. Hence, no more comments on it. I have not read all the novels of Saratchandra. This humble write-up includes only the ones I have gone through.

I have read a major part of the draft of Saratchandra's novel *Charitrahin*. I have not had the opportunity to go through the full text, possibly it has not been completed as yet. But from the part I have already read, I think a character like Sābitrī is an altogether new and wonderful pattern of creation in Bengali literature. With the stars oddly set against her, she was socially humiliated and treated as a prostitute, though she actually came from a decent family. I do not know her episode till the end, but I need nothing more to conclude that she was absolutely immaculate. Yet, the fact that she was stigmatized in the eyes of the society can be attributed to her destiny alone. But who has ever been able to make a sacrifice the way she did in order to save the person whom she had offered her life and soul, from the stigma unfortunately attached to her? Whenever Satīs, earnestly longing her love, came to adore her with great tenderness, she contrived to make herself appear so lowly and hurt him with such cruel words that he instantly dropped the flower he had brought to worship her with, and returned with his heart burning with hatred and bitterness. Sābitrī really wanted this. She did not want her object of worship to sit with her in the same row and share her social stigma. Hence she wished with all her heart he hated her. It is this sacrifice that constitutes real love. While her feeling was such that if she could get Satīs she would not ever long to be an angel or goddess of paradise, she set up a barbed fence across the path of their union with her own hands and thus derived satisfaction. She burnt with misery every time she incited hatred in her object of love in such a way. Giving up all hope of her own happiness, she relentlessly held herself back from the company of her beloved. Women can withstand many odds in the company of the beloved, or even in expectation of achieving that happiness some day. But how many have been willingly able to sacrifice their all and embrace asceticism merely on the apprehension that the beloved might be maligned by the breath of public censure? The blooming flowers of her hope dropped off in consequence of this sacrifice and she suffered deep agony. There is no lust for enjoyment in Sābitrī's character. Separating from her lover, she glorifies the nobility in love. There is no other desire, no other happiness in this love, the ultimate good of the beloved being its only object. It eagerly welcomes all sufferings like the omnipotent earth. In order to keep the object of its worship immaculate and beyond the reach of all hazards, it sacrifices the same even after having gained it. This love is a ritual in the mind's hidden bower of love, it is a new type of *Sati* on burning pyre of desire. This love is like an underground stream. One who is able to look into the deepest region of the heart will realise this. The ordinary reader is likely to lose sight of such issues as why the moment her lover Satīs comes to yield willingly, Sābitrī disgraces herself on purpose and makes him angry, apathetic and even feel repentant, or why she, in a mild tone, confirms the ludicrous conclusions brewing in the mind of the sceptic Satīs and blurs her bright image.

<sup>1</sup> Later published as a book under the title *Śrikānta, Part One*

he himself has engraved in his heart. The profound spirit of sacrifice in Sābitrī's character, her self-humiliation to endow her beloved with sacredness and her urge to insult herself wilfully, thus lowering herself before the one in whose high esteem women glory in finding a place, owe their origin to an unthinkably great love as the readers will understand from the narrative. This extraordinary power of self-restraint is rare among ordinary heroines. Sābitrī did not give a fiery speech on love like Āyēṣā, nor did she, like Kundanandini, ruin her lover's household with her innocence despite being personally harmless. She did not, even like Saratchandra's own creation Kusum, hold back love with personal grievances. But her amazing power of self-restraint has endowed her with a glory unsurpassable. The feelings of her heart may be expressed only after the manner of Chandidas dedicating himself: "I know not own bliss or sorrow, thy good alone brings me a good morrow."

In conclusion, we rejoice at the emergence in the literary realm of this writer who is a rare genius endowed with a new energy of creation. So far, nobody from among the modern writers of Bengal has sufficiently depicted the beauty of filial affection. Everyone has stepped into the temple of literature holding aloft the torch of conjugal or free love. Barring the only exception of Rabindranath's *Chhuti*, such a delicious treatment of filial love has so long been rare in modern literature.

Saratchandra has made this nectar flow through the homes of Bengal by pouring forth the wonderful theme in profusion.

*Translated by Ashim Mukhopadhyay*

# শেষ প্রশ্ন

মানিক বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়

আমি 'শেষ প্রশ্ন' লিখলে লোকে আমান প্রতিভায় অবাক হ'য়ে যেত। কারণ, তাহলে 'শেষ প্রশ্ন'র বিচারই লোকে করত, লেখকের পূর্বতন সাহিত্যসৃষ্টির সঙ্গে বইখানার সর্বোচ্চ মানদণ্ডে তুলনা করে দেখত না।

বাস্তবিক, 'শেষ প্রশ্ন' সম্বন্ধে যেখানে যেও বিবৃতি সমালোচনা পড়েছি এবং শুনেছি তার মধ্যে এই অভিযোগটাই প্রধান হ'য়ে উঠেছে যে, শরৎবাবু এ বই লিখলেন কেন? 'শেষ প্রশ্ন'র অভিনবত্ব এ'দেব বিষয় নেই, বইখানায় পরিচিত শব্দচক্রে খুঁজে না পেয়ে এ'রা ক্ষুব্ধ। বড় লেখকদের এই এক মুঞ্চিল। তাঁদের লেখার মধ্যে যে জিনিষগুলি constant অর্থাৎ লিখনভঙ্গী, চরিত্রচিত্রণ পদ্ধতি, রস পরিবেশননীতি প্রভৃতি বৈশিষ্ট্য, এগুলি পাঠকের মনে স্থায়ীভাবে মুদ্রিত হ'য়ে যায়। 'শেষ প্রশ্ন' পড়তে বসার আগে আমরা ভাবি, 'চরিত্রহীন', 'গৃহদাহ'র শব্দচক্রে লেখা পড়তে বসলাম। 'শেষ প্রশ্ন' পড়বার সময় আমরা মনে রাখি, 'শব্দচক্রে লেখা পড়ছি'। পৃষ্ঠার পর পৃষ্ঠায় এ ধারণা আহত হ'তে থাকলে বইখানার বিরুদ্ধে অভিযোগের আমাদের অন্ত থাকে না।

অথচ, সাংসারিক একইভাবে বই লিখে এসে, স্টাইল, টেকনিক সমস্ত বদলে সম্পূর্ণ নতুন ধরনের ভাল বই লেখা বড় প্রতিভারই পরিচয়। ভারতবর্ষে টুকনো টুকনো 'শেষ প্রশ্ন' পড়ে ব্যাপাটা আমরাও ভাল বোধগম্য হইনি। তারপর একসঙ্গে সমগ্র বইখানা পড়লাম। সর্বস্বয়ং ভাবলাম এত নাম ও প্রতিষ্ঠার বোঝা বয়ে নতুন লেখক হবার সাহস শব্দচক্রে পেলেন কোথায়?

ভাবনাটা মাঠে মাঝে গেল না। নতুন লেখকের ভাল বইয়ের মত 'শেষ প্রশ্ন'ও অথবা নির্মিত হ'ল।

কবিতার মত ছবি এ'কে রবীন্দ্রনাথ পেলেন প্রশংসা, আর একবারে তখন কিছু ক'রে শব্দচক্রে হলেন অপরাধী।

কথা উঠবে নতুনই সব নয়। কিন্তু নতুনই শুধু চটক অথবা গুণ সেটা বিচার সাপেক্ষ। চমক-দেওয়া অনেক কিছু মানুষকে ঠিকিয়েছে ব'লেই সর্বত্র অভিনবত্ব মেকী নয়।

'শেষ প্রশ্ন'র রস-সংযম থেকে রস সংগ্রহ করা সকলের পক্ষে সহজ নয়। যে বই কাঁদিয়ে ছাড়ে তার বরুণ রসের অসংযম প্রত্যেকটি অশ্রুবিন্দুতে প্রমাণিত হ'য়ে যায়। শরৎবাবুর অনেক বইতে দেখা যায় তাঁর দরদ মানুষের প্রতি : বিশেষ ক'রে এই বাংলা দেশের মানুষের প্রতি তাঁর ভালবাসা আটকে ছাপিয়ে উঠেছে। কিন্তু তিনি যে দরদসর্বধ লেখক নন, আটের মর্যাদাও যে তিনি বোঝেন, 'শেষ প্রশ্ন' তা নিঃসংশয়রূপে প্রমাণ করেছে।

'শেষ প্রশ্ন'র রসসৃষ্টি সম্পূর্ণ কলাসম্মত ও গভীর। উপন্যাসের চরিত্র পাঠকের ইচ্ছা ও ভাললাগাকেই সমীহ ক'রে পরিণতির দিকে চলবে না, তার গতির মধ্যে পরিপূর্ণ স্বাধীনতা থাকবে, এমনকি লেখকের ব্যক্তিত্বের প্রভাব পর্যন্ত এড়িয়ে নিজের ব্যক্তিত্বকে

ফুটিয়ে তুলবে। হামসুনের *Growth of the Soil* ভিন্ন আর কোন বইয়ে এ নিয়ম যথাযথ পালিত হ'তে দেখিনি! বাংলাসাহিত্যে এ গুল যদি উল্লেখযোগ্যভাবে কোন বই-এ থাকে সে-বই 'শেষ প্রশ্ন'। এদিক দিয়ে 'শেষ প্রশ্ন'র প্রেট্‌স অস্বীকার করবার উপায় নেই।

এই গুণের জন্য কমল গোরাব নারীসংস্কার নয়। সে নিজের ব্যক্তিত্বকে সম্পূর্ণ করেছে, সেজন্য পাঠক, লেখক, উপন্যাস রচনার প্রথা কোন কিছুই মুখ চেয়ে থাকে নি। তার জীবনের ঘটনাপ্রবাহ, তার সঞ্চিত জ্ঞান, অভিজ্ঞতা, সংস্কার প্রভৃতি যেখানে তাকে ঠেলে এনেছে সেইখানে দাঁড়িয়ে নিজেকে সে ঘোষণা করেছে, সে স্থানটি তার পক্ষে বিপজ্জনক কিনা সে হিসেব ক'রে নিরাপদ আশ্রয়ে সরে যাবার চেষ্টা করেনি।

কমলের বিরুদ্ধে অভিযোগ শোনা যায়, সে নাকি একটি bundle of speeches, 'শেষ প্রশ্ন' নাকি এদেশের সঙ্গে ও দেশের যুদ্ধের মহাভারত, কমল ওদেশের হ'য়ে একাই যুদ্ধ করেছে। মতের লড়াই 'শেষপ্রশ্ন'-এ নেই এমন নয়, কিন্তু সেটা প্রধান নয়। তর্ক করা কমল চরিত্রের একটা প্রধান দিক, এদেশ-ওদেশ সমস্যাটা তাব তর্কের বিষয়বস্তু মাত্র। আধুনিক মানুষের মনের দুয়ারে আজ সমস্যার ভিড়, মানুষকে আজ অত্যন্ত মাথা ঘামাতে হয়, মস্তিষ্কের পরিচয় না দিলে আজকের মানুষের অর্ধেক পরিচয়ের বেশী দেওয়া যায় না। কমল যা বলে তা সত্য কি মিথ্যা সেটা তাই বড় কথা নয়। অত কথা সে কেন বলে এ প্রশ্নও অচল। তার বলার মধ্যে তার চরিত্রের যতখানি মস্তিষ্কের অধিকার ততখানি পরিষ্কার ফুটে উঠেছে কিনা সেইটুকুই বিচার্য।

অর্থাৎ তর্ক বড় নয়, বড় কমল নিজে। এই কারণেই 'শেষ প্রশ্ন'-এ কমলের উপযুক্ত প্রতিপক্ষ নেই, যে অক্ষয়ের মত শূণ্য লাফালাফি না ক'রে সমানভাবে তর্ক চালাতে পারে। এই কারণেই কমল হবিষ্য কবে, তাব কথা ও কাজে যে অসামঞ্জস্য বহু সমালোচককে বিচলিত করেছে। নইলে কমলের মত সংস্কারবাজিতা রূপসীর দারিদ্র্য আমিও বিশ্বাস করতাম না।

কিন্তু কমলের হৃদয়কে শব্দচন্দ্র ভুলে থাকেন নি : 'শেষ প্রশ্ন'র অন্যান্য নরনারীর মত কমলের মর্মকোষের পরিচয় যথাবীতি অভিব্যক্তি লাভ করেছে। না হ'লে 'শেষ প্রশ্ন'-এ রসাব্যব ঘটত। কিন্তু পূর্বেই বলেছি 'শেষ প্রশ্ন'র রস-সংযম অসাধারণ, ফেনিল উজ্জ্বলের মধ্যে সে রসসৃষ্টি নিজেকে সন্তুষ্ট করেনি। আপনাব কক্ষপথে ঘুরতে ঘুরতে অজিত আর কমল যখন কাছাকাছি এসে পড়েছে, আপনারা তখন তাদের লক্ষ্য করেছেন?'

টেকনিক বলুন, লেখকের রসবোধের গভীরতা বলুন, আর অবস্থা, চরিত্র ও প্রকাশভঙ্গীর উপর লেখকের সহজ কর্তৃত্বই বলুন এইগুলি higher literature-এর লক্ষণ ও ধর্ম। 'শেষ প্রশ্ন'-এ এ সমস্তের সমাবেশ যদি আবিস্কৃত ও প্রশংসিত না হয়, যদি অর্থহীন নিন্দা ও যুক্তিহীন প্রশংসার মধ্যে 'শেষ প্রশ্ন'র সমালোচনা সীমাবদ্ধ থাকে, বাংলা সাহিত্যরসিকের পক্ষে সে বড় লজ্জার কথা হবে। নির্মম বিশ্লেষণ ও নিরপেক্ষ বিচার সহ্য করবার ক্ষমতা 'শেষ প্রশ্ন'র আছে।

'শেষ প্রশ্ন' সম্বন্ধে আমাব যা বলার ছিল তার কিছুই বলা হ'ল না, উপরন্তু সংক্ষেপে বলার অপরাধ হ'ল। কিন্তু 'শেষ প্রশ্ন'র বিশদ আলোচনা ভবিষ্যতে করা চলবে। 'শেষ প্রশ্ন' যে ভাল বই, অসাধারণ ভাল বই, শরৎচন্দ্রনার উপলক্ষে এই কথাটি ব'লে নেবার সুযোগ আমি ছাড়তে পারলাম না।

# Śēṣ Praśna

Manik Bandyopadhyay

Had I written *Śēṣ Praśna* myself, people would have marvelled at my genius. For, they would have then judged the novel on its own merit and its total departure from the previous literary compositions of its author would not have been construed as a crime.

In fact, among the various adverse criticisms I have read and heard about *Śēṣ Praśna*, the one that emerges as the main is why Saratchandra wrote this novel. They do not wonder at the novelty of *Śēṣ Praśna*, but are aggrieved for not finding their familiar Saratchandra in it. This is indeed a trouble eminent writers have to face. The features which are constant in their writings, that is their literary technique, portrayal of characters, aesthetic style and such other characteristics, are indelibly imprinted upon the mind of readers. With *Śēṣ Praśna* in hand we think that we are going to read a book by Saratchandra, the writer of *Charitrahin* and *Gṛhadāha*. When we go through *Śēṣ Praśna*, we keep in mind, 'we are reading a book by Saratchandra'. As this preconception is jolted page after page, our complaints against the book become countless. As against this, to write a new book of a completely new kind, changing the style, technique and such things, after following the same pattern throughout one's literary career, is a sign of great genius. In fact, I myself could not properly make out what it was about when I read *Śēṣ Praśna* in instalments in Bharatbarsa. Later, I went through the whole book at a time. I thought with wonder how did Saratchandra get the courage and daring to come out as a new writer after so much fame and esteem were heaped upon him.

My thoughts were not in vain. Like a good creation by a new author *Śēṣ Praśna* was condemned without reason.

While Rabindranath received applause for his paintings as for his poems, Saratchandra was denounced for doing something completely new.

People would say that novelty is not everything. Whether novelty is mere stunt or a virtue is a matter of judgement. Novelty in every case cannot be called fake just because what looks dazzling at first has often deceived people.

It is not easy for all to get pleasure from the artistic restraint we find in *Śēṣ Praśna*.



The book that forces tears down proves its lack of restraint in creating pathos through every drop of tear it draws. Saratchandra's love for humanity is manifest in many of his books; especially, his love for the people of this land of Bengal often supersedes art, yet, that he is not an author for whom compassion and sympathy are all, but is also very much alive to the importance of art, is proved beyond any shadow of doubt in *Śēṣ Praśna*. The aesthetics of *Śēṣ Praśna* is deep and perfectly artistic.

The characters in a novel should not proceed to a certain culmination in deference to the likings and desires of the reader; on the contrary, they should proceed independently, uninfluenced by the personality of their creator, and should unfold their own personality. I have not found this principle to be properly followed in any book other than Hamsun's *The Growth of the Soil*. If this virtue be remarkably present in any book in Bengali literature, it is in *Śēṣ Praśna*. In this respect the excellence of *Śēṣ Praśna* cannot be denied.

It is for this virtue that Kamal is not the female counterpart of Ġōrā. She has attained the bloom of her personality and has not had to depend upon the reader or the author or the technique of novel writing. She has proclaimed herself boldly from a position where she has been placed by the current of events in her life, by her accumulated wisdom, experience and prejudices. She never attempts to escape to a haven of safety making calculations if this position is dangerous for her.

The complaint heard against Kamal is that she is 'a bundle of speeches'. *Śēṣ Praśna* is alleged to be an epic of the battle between the East and the West, and Kamal fights alone for the latter. Not to say that there is not any conflict of ideals in *Śēṣ Praśna*, but that is not the dominant aspect. To go into argument is a principal trait in Kamal's character—the East-West problem is but a subject matter of her polemics. Problems throng in the mind of modern man, he has to tax his brain severely. The portrayal of a modern man is only half-complete without the revelation of his intellectual faculty. It is, therefore, not the important point whether what Kamal says is true or false. It is also no use asking why she talks so much. What is to be judged is whether her words adequately reveal to what extent intellect dominates her character.

In other words, it is not her polemics, but Kamal herself who is great. It is for this reason that Kamal has no matching opponent in *Śēṣ Praśna*, who can hold his own in arguing with her without going into antics like Akṣay. This is the reason why she practises austerity, a contradiction between her words and action which has puzzled many a critic. Otherwise, I myself would also not have believed in the poverty of a woman as beautiful and free from prejudices as Kamal.

But Saratchandra has not been forgetful of the emotions of Kamal. The inner self of Kamal, like other characters in *Śēṣ Praśna*, is properly revealed in the novel. Otherwise, the aesthetic appeal of *Śēṣ Praśna* would be wanting. I have already said that the artistic restraint in *Śēṣ Praśna* is exceptional, its aesthetic appeal has not cheapened itself through a mere exuberance of frothy emotion. Have you noticed Kamal and Ajit when they drew closer in the course of their movement in their own orbits?

The technique of writing, the depth of aesthetic sense of the author, his mastery over plot and characters, his style of expression—these are the marks and traits of higher literature. If a combination of all these are not discovered and appreciated in *Śēṣ Praśna*, if the criticism remains confined within baseless condemnation and irrational praise, it will be a matter of very much shame for all lovers of literature in Bengal. *Śēṣ Praśna* wields the power to withstand threadbare analysis and impartial criticism.

Almost nothing has been expressed here of what I wanted to say about *Śēṣ Praśna*. Moreover, I am guilty of brevity. A detailed discussion on *Śēṣ Praśna* may be undertaken in future. But on this occasion of paying tribute to Saratchandra, I cannot miss the opportunity to say that *Śēṣ Praśna* is indeed a good work, an exceptionally good work.

*Translated by Manasi Bhattacharya*



# শরৎচন্দ্রের প্রতি

রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর

## কল্যাণীয় শরৎচন্দ্র

তুমি জীবনের নির্দিষ্ট পথের প্রায় দুই-তৃতীয়াংশ উত্তীর্ণ হয়েছ। এই উপলক্ষে তোমাকে অভিনন্দিত করবার জন্য তোমার বন্ধুবর্গের এই আমন্ত্রণসভা।

বয়স বাড়়ে, আয়ুৰ সপ্তয় ক্ষয় হয়, তা নিয়ে আনন্দ কববার কাৰণ নেই। আনন্দ করি যখন দেখি জীবনের পরিণতির সঙ্গে জীবনের দানের পরিমাণ ক্ষয় হয়নি। তোমার সাহিত্যরসসত্ত্বের নিমন্ত্রণ আজও রয়েছে উন্মুক্ত, অকৃপণ দাক্ষিণ্যে ভরে উঠবে তোমার পরিবেষণপাত্র। তাই জয়ধ্বনি করতে এসেছে গ্রাম্য দেশের লোক তোমার দ্বারে।

সাহিত্যের দান যারা গ্রহণ করতে আসে তারা নির্ভয়। তারা কাল যা পেয়েছে তার মূল্য প্রভূত হ'লেও আজকের মুঠোয় কিছু কম পড়লেই শ্রুতি করতে কুণ্ঠিত হয়না। পূর্বে যা ভোগ করেছে তাব কৃতজ্ঞতার দেয় থেকে দাম কেটে নেয়, আজ যেটুকু কম পড়েছে তার হিসেব করে। তারা লোভী, তাই ভুলে যায় রসতৃপ্তির প্রমাণ ভবা পেট দিয়ে নয়, আনন্দিত রসনা দিয়ে; নতুন মাল বোঝাই দিয়ে নয়, সুখদানের চিরশ্রুতি দিয়ে; তারা মানতে চায় না রসের ভোজে স্থম্প যা তাও বেশী, এক যা তাও অনেক।

এটা জানা কথা যে, পাঠকদের চোখের সামনে সর্বদা নিজেকে জানান না দিলে পুরোনো ফোটোগ্রাফের মত জানার রেখা হলে হ'য়ে মিলিয়ে আসে। অবকাশের ছেদটা একটু লম্বা হ'লেই লোকে সন্দেহ করে যেটা পেয়েছিল সেটাই ফাঁকি, যেটা পায়নি সেটাই খাঁটি সত্য। একবার আলো জলেছিল, তারপরে তেল ফুরিয়েছে, এমনক লেখকের পক্ষে এইটেই সবচেয়ে বড়ো ট্রাজেডি। কেননা আলো জ্বলটাকে মানুষ অশ্রদ্ধা করতে থাকে তেল ফুরোনোর নালিশ নিয়ে।

তাই বলি, মানুষের মাক-বয়স যখন পেরিয়ে গেছে ওখনো যাবা তার অভিনন্দন করে তারা কেবল অতীতের প্রাপ্তিস্বীকার করে না, তারা অনাগতের পরেও প্রত্যাশা জানায়। তারা শরতের আউষ ধান ঘরে বোঝাই ক'রেও সেই সঙ্গে হেমন্তের আমন ধানের পরেও আগাম দাবী রাখে। খুসি হ'য়ে বলে, মানুষটা এক-ফসলা নয়।

আজ শরৎচন্দ্রের অভিনন্দনের মূল্য এই যে, দেশের লোক কেবল যে তাঁর দানের মনোহারিতা ভোগ করেছে তা নয়, তার অক্ষয়তাও মেনে নিয়েছে। ইতস্তত যদি কিছু প্রতিবাদ থাকে তো ভালোই, না থাকলেই ভাবনার কারণ, এই সহজ কথাটা লেখকেরা অনেক সময়ে মনের খেদে ভুলে যায়। ভালো লাগতে শ্রদ্ধাবতই ভালো লাগেনা এমন লোককে সৃষ্টিকর্তা যে সৃজন করেছেন, সেলাম ক'রে তাদেরও তো মেনে নিতে হবে—তাদের সংখ্যাও তো কম নয়। তাদের কাজও আছে নিশ্চয়ই, কোনো রচনার উপরে তাদের

খর কটাক্ষ যদি না পড়ে তবে সেটাকে ভাগ্যের অনাদর বলেই ধরে নিতে হবে। নিল্লার কুগ্রহ বাক্যে পাশ কাটিয়ে যায়, জানব তার প্রশংসার দাম বেশি নয়। আমাদের দেশে যমের দৃষ্টি এড়াবার জন্যে বাপ-মা ছেলের নাম রাখে এককড়ি দুকড়ি। সাহিত্যেও এককড়ি দুকড়ি যা বা তাবা নিরাপদ। যে লেখায় প্রাণ আছে প্রতিপক্ষতার দ্বারা তার যশের মূল্য বাড়িয়ে তোলে তার বাস্তবতার মূল্য। এই বিরোধের কাজটা যাদেব তারা বিপরীতপন্থা ভক্ত। রামের ভয়ঙ্কর ভক্ত যেমন রাবণ।

জ্যোতিষী অসীম আকাশে ডুব মেরে সন্ধান ক'বে বের করেন নানা জগৎ—নানা রশ্মিসমবায়ে গড়া, নানা কক্ষপথে নানা বেগে আবর্তিত। শরৎচন্দ্রের দৃষ্টি ডুব দিয়েছে বাঙালির হৃদয়বহসে। সুখে দুঃখে মিলনে বিচ্ছেদে সংঘটিত বিচিত্র সৃষ্টির তিনি এমন করে পরিচয় দিয়েছেন 'বাঙালি' যাতে আপনাকে প্রত্যক্ষ জানতে পেরেছে। তার প্রমাণ পাই তার অফুরাণ আনন্দে। যেমন অন্তরের সঙ্গে তারা খুঁসি হয়েছে এমন আব কারো লেখায় তাবা হয়নি। অন্য লেখকেরা অনেকে প্রশংসা পেয়েছে কিন্তু সর্বজনীন হৃদয়ের এমন আতিথ্য পায়নি। এ বিশ্বয়ের চমক নয়, এ প্রীতি। অন্যায়সে যে প্রচুর সফলতা তিনি পেয়েছেন তাতে তিনি আমাদের ঈর্ষাভাজন।

আজ শরৎচন্দ্রের অভিনন্দনে বিশেষ গর্ব করতে পারতুম যদি তাঁকে বলতে পারতুম তিনি একান্ত আমার আবিষ্কার। কিন্তু তিনি কারো স্বাক্ষরিত অভিজ্ঞানপত্রের জন্যে অপেক্ষা করেন নি। আজ তাঁর অভিনন্দন বাংলাদেশের ঘরে ঘরে স্তব-উচ্চসিত। শুধু কথাসাহিত্যের পথে নয়, নাট্যাভিনয়ে চিত্রাভিনয়ে তাঁর প্রতিভার সংস্রবে আসবার জন্যে বাঙালির ঔৎসুক্য বেড়ে চলেছে। তিনি বাঙালির বেদনাব কেন্দ্রে আপন বাণীর স্পর্শ দিয়েছেন।

সাহিত্য উপদেষ্টার চেয়ে প্রচুর আসন অনেক উচ্চে, চিন্তাশক্তির বিতর্ক নয়, সম্প্রদায়ের পূর্ণ দৃষ্টিই সাহিত্যে শাস্ত্র মর্যাদা পেয়ে থাকে। কবির আসন থেকে আমি বিশেষভাবে সেই প্রচুর সেই দ্রষ্টা শরৎচন্দ্রকে মাল্যদান করি। তিনি শতায়ু হ'য়ে বাংলাসাহিত্যকে সমৃদ্ধিশালী করুন—তাঁর পাঠকের দৃষ্টিকে শিক্ষা দিন মানুষকে সত্য ক'রে দেখতে, স্পষ্ট ক'রে মানুষকে প্রকাশ করুন তার দোষে গুণে ভালোয় মন্দায়—চমৎকারজনক শিক্ষাজনক কোনো দৃষ্টান্তকে নয়, মানুষের চিরন্তন অভিজ্ঞতাকে প্রতিষ্ঠিত করুন তাঁর স্বচ্ছ প্রাজ্ঞ ভাষায়।

# To Saratchandra

Rabindranath Tagore

My dear Saratchandra,

You have journeyed through nearly two-thirds of your life's destined course. On this your birth anniversary, all your friends have invited you here to offer you their felicitations.

As one grows old, life's store diminishes—this is, indeed, no cause for rejoicing. But we do rejoice when we see one in whom, despite the passage of years, life's blessings remain unimpaired. Even today, you give an open invitation to the banquet of literature ; with unstinted generosity your bowl of offerings will overflow. This is why your friends have gathered at your door today to sing your praises.

Those who come to the feast of literature are merciless ; if they receive less today, forgetting the boundless gifts of yesterday, they do not hesitate to frown in instant displeasure. They calculate, and taking away from the debt of gratitude for past bounty, they keep a record only of what they fail to procure today. They are consumed with greed, they forget that aesthetic delight lies, not in the repleteness of the stomach, but in the fineness of flavour, not in the piling up of novelties, but in the taste that lasts for ever. They choose not to understand that in literary appreciation a little is a great deal, and that one can be manifold.

It is true that the writer must continually reveal himself to his readers lest, like a faded photograph, his familiar features become blurred and indistinct. Let the moment of silence stretch a little too long and the readers will fear that what they had gained was of no value and what they failed to receive was all that mattered. Many a writer sees in this his greatest tragedy, that the lamp he had lit is now dry, for people, while complaining that there is no oil left, belittle the flame that had once burned brightly.

And so I say that when men render homage to a writer who has passed the middle years of his life they not only acknowledge what they have received in the past but also express hopes for what is yet to come. Though their granaries are full with the crop of early autumn they look forward, as by right, to the harvest of later seasons. Joyfully they say, this man has more than a single yield.

This is the significance of our felicitations of Saratchandra today—his countrymen have not only felt the enchantment of what he offers, they also acknowledge its permanence. If, perchance, criticism comes his way, that is to be desired; had there been none, then would there have been cause for concern. The literary artist often forgets this simple truth when he is hurt by the critic's censure. There are some who find pleasure only in finding fault, but He who creates all has created them and they also must be hailed with acceptance. Their ranks are many and assuredly they too have a role. If their severe gaze fails to rest on any work of literature that would indeed be an unkind stroke of fate. If the evil planet of criticism were to pass an author by, then praise itself would lose much of its value. In our country parents christen their sons 'Fkkadi' or 'Dukadi'<sup>1</sup>, hoping to avert the attention of the god of Death. In literature also penny and half-penny writers are secure in their obscurity. But when a writer's work throbs with life it is the detractors who establish the reality of its existence and so enhance the value of its praise. It behoves those whose task is to oppose, to follow by a contrary path, as did Rāvaṇa, the grim devotee of Rāma.

The astronomer plumbs the boundless regions of the skies and finds worlds without number, emerging out of a myriad streams of light, and moving at different speeds in many different orbits. Even so has Saratchandra's eye penetrated into the mysterious universe of the Bengali heart. The complex blend of happiness and sorrow, of unions and partings, that has gone into its creation has been so portrayed that through him Bengalis know themselves. Their unending pleasure is proof enough; no other writer has given them such intensity of happiness. Others, not a few, have received praise but none else has been thus welcomed into every heart in Bengal. This is not the sudden thrill of wonder, it is the fulness of love. Well may we envy him, for he has effortlessly reaped this abundant recompense.

I would have specially prided myself in today's felicitations had I been able to say that he was entirely my discovery; but he needed no formal letter of introduction. Today every Bengali home spontaneously greets him with praise. Not alone in the field of letters—on the stage, on the screen—the Bengali's eagerness to come close in contact with his genius ever increases. He has evoked, through his words, the agony of the Bengali heart.

In the world of literary activity the creator ranks much higher than the critic, for it is the all-encompassing vision of the imagination, not the analytical sharpness of the intellect, that reveals always the true greatness of literature. As a poet I now come forward to garland this creator, this man of vision, this Saratchandra.

May he live a hundred years to enrich Bengali literature, may he impart to his readers the wisdom that brings with it real knowledge of man, may he reveal human nature clearly with its faults and its virtues, with its good and its bad, may he enshrine through the clear limpid melody of his words—not isolated incidents that surprise or instruct—but the eternal experience of the human mind.

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<sup>1</sup> Penny or Tuppence, in nearest English equivalent

*Translated by Kajal Sengupta*

# An original genius

Srikumar Banerji

Undiscerning hyperbole is the bane of criticism, and what is worse, it does not tend to advance the cause of its idol. A sober and reasoned estimate of the real points of greatness in an author does much more in fixing his position than a mere indulgence in vague superlatives in which the note of precision is painfully missed. Nowhere is the liability to this kind of misjudgement greater than in the case of a Bengali man of letters who stands in a somewhat different position from his European brothers. In Europe the very multitude of great figures and towering personalities makes precise assessment an imperative necessity, and keeps down every author at his own true level by the very insistence of the process of comparison. The very rarity of such great figures in the literary world of Bengal tempts their critics to claim for them an all round perfection without any misgiving or a sense of encroachment on other people's domain, while the comparative process is not at work to check the tendency towards extravagant estimate. Great men in Bengal have already suffered from this uncritical excess of praise. The great Bankimchandra who had at one time been credited with the mastery of a magician's wand, so immaculate seemed to be the quality of his greatness, swift and sudden his attainment of perfection, is now discovered to have had flaws and rents in his magic robe; and the modern school of realistic novelists already affect to look down upon him as a back number. The great genius of Rabindranath, so unique in its inspiration, so versatile in its interests, has had also its periodical phases of detraction. Provoked partly at any rate by the unwise enthusiasm of his uncritical admirers, Rabindranath, the saint and prophet, has provoked a hearsay which would not have dared to raise its head against Rabindranath the poet. The same influence is also discernible to be at work in the political field, and a time may come when Deshabandhu Chittaranjan and Mahatma Gandhi may have to stand in need of being saved from their admirers, so that the real elements of greatness in them might be safeguarded against all misapprehensions and shown in their true perspective to the ages that are yet to come.

The revolutionary character of Saratchandra's outlook on life has probably helped to intensify this tendency in his particular case. Never in the field of Bengali literature did the emergence of an original genius create a greater stir. His bold heterodoxy, his scathing criticism of accepted



values and current standards, his championship of forbidden aspects of love which lay so long under a social ban—all created an uproar, the like of which had never been witnessed in the still and placid atmosphere of Bengali literature. The orthodox were shocked and scandalised to a degree at finding their most cherished ideals and convictions subjected to a cold, relentless scrutiny which left them curiously stripped and bare. On the other hand, the steadily growing band of free thinkers and sceptics eagerly clutched at this most providential support reached out to them by an original genius and was literally thrown into transports of joy. And between these two extremes, the real value of Saratchandra's work, his permanent contribution to fiction, has tended to be a little obscured and discussion on him to centre on points of subsidiary importance. The ethical and social problems raised in his work have arrogated to themselves a degree of undeserved importance and shelved to a certain extent the freely artistic appreciation of it.

In trying to focus our attention on the point of view that really matters—the artistic aspect of Saratchandra's writings—the first element that challenges notice is the singular felicity and depth in his treatment of love. Love, in Bengali fiction, has had a singularly unsatisfactory and unauthentic record. It had been described with a prevailingly idealistic bias, and in certain well-recognised conventional situations that admitted of no extension beyond the old rigid limits. So far as the dawn of love is concerned, its flamelike emergence out of the dead level of ordinary social intercourse, the subject had practically passed unrecorded. All courtship is severely eliminated from social life and relegated to the remote background of historical past, where again the treatment is of the coldest and most conventional kind. It is the raptures and vicissitudes of wedded love that find almost exclusive treatment, and if forbidden love is brought in, it is only with a warning finger held up to point the moral. Bankimchandra, first Bengali novelist to inaugurate psychological, as contrasted with a merely poetic treatment of love, seldom oversteps these rigid limits, and his treatment is more suggestive than detailed, thus indicating deep ineradicable affinities with the method and outlook of poetry. Rabindranath, specially in his *Chōkhēr Bāli*, anticipates Saratchandra in his detailed analysis of the workings of unauthorised love and must have given hints and inspiration to the latter; but in Rabindranath there are prevailingly realistic impressions and he lifts the treatment above the level of a cold psychological analysis. But gererally speaking, before the advent of Saratchandra, we had scarcely any detailed authentic account of the genesis of love, its subtle, devious and often contradictory ways, its persistent agonised struggle against a rigid, social and ethical order, its defiances and its strange and irresponsible self-revelations.

This entirely novel, original treatment of love is, no doubt, the prime feather in Saratchandra's cap. In the novels of the preceding age the current of love had been shown as setting in one direction only; and difference between chaste and unchaste forms of love rigidly marked off as by stone walls. Saratchandra unfolds to us the curious mystery of love in all its complex interactions and subtle undertones, its strange lapses and manifold unaccountable disguises. We see it growing before our own eyes helped and hindered by the everyday opportunities and incidents of life, not seldom unconscious of itself and winning its annihilator, sheltering under the mask of indifference and even positive cruelty, and yet inevitably urged forward towards self-expression with the mysterious persistence of life itself. We are made to hear its authentic voice, not high-pitched and sentimental, not crudely emphatic and declamatory, but in its soft and deliberate undertones, its quiet thrills of passion infusing a subtle witchery into the everyday tones of talk. The devious yet unmistakable workings of love between Satīś and Sābitrī in his *Charitrahīn*, or between Bijayā and Narēn in his *Dattā* are evidences of a much defter and more artistic handling of love than any other Bengali fiction before Saratchandra affords.

For such love as is described above, Saratchandra is forced to apply his sickle in alien, forbidden fields and to hunt out strange breeding places. The four corners of traditional orthodox ways of life are not wide enough to admit and house such a truant. The great handicap of Indian society is that it tends to present to us love as a readymade accomplished fact which considerably curtails the opportunities of the novelist. Love in Indian life and literature is almost invariably tied to the matrimonial yoke, and the only opportunity of psychology is to show it as tugging against the strings by which it is held fast. Young men and women in our society have but few chances of being thrown together so as to afford openings for the growth of love in a perfectly healthy and normal way. No doubt an ultramodern outlook on life, the restrictions have been to a certain extent relaxed, so that the growth of love within the limits of ordinary social intercourse has just come within the range of probability, but the background is by no means as favourable as in societies of the West. It follows from this that any Bengali in its working as a growing dynamic passion has to fall back upon very questionable expedients in furtherance of his purpose. This desperate strait to which the author is reduced accounts for the amazing frequency with which heroines tend to be found in the ranks of prostitutes, maid-servants and coolie women—classes of females free from those restrictions that beset their more respectable sisters. And such a choice satisfies more than one passion in the novelist and the reading public—the democratic virtuous passion in the upper ranks, the craving for novelty and sensation which hunts for an effect of strangeness in unlikely quarters and the tender and sentimental condoning of moral lapses in the victims of social tyranny and injustice. And from the standpoint of art also, this new tendency is not without justification, as it makes for a more dynamic and piquant presentation of love than the somewhat quiescent and bloodless feeling that passed for it in more conventional and respectable situation.

But even a new tendency can be overworked, and a rebellion against conventions may end in the creation of a new convention and in this lies a grave menace to the future of the Bengali novel. Writers without any originality or authentic insight into love find it to their interest to introduce these questionable characters, just for ministering to depraved tastes. Careful analysis and truthful record are giving way to an unmeasured glorification of vice and indecency—pictures which are lacking in the least excuse of an artistic semblance. It is a pity therefore, that the new channel opened up by the genius of Saratchandra is in a fair way of being choked up by noxious weeds, but for this the blame lies elsewhere than on the shoulders of the initiator.

The next noticeable feature in Saratchandra's writings consists in his portraits of women. Women in Bengali literature, as in life, had hitherto played but too much a passive and quiescent part. They had been the unresisting victims of circumstances; their love had been the type that meets the demands made upon it rather than formulate its own demands; their personality had taken the shape of the social environment rather than put forth any active traits. In fact, before Rabindranath, the woman's voice had hardly found utterance in literature, and the woman's point of view passed almost unrepresented. The heroines of Bankimchandra, notwithstanding all their charm and grace, can hardly claim to represent the feminine point of view; they are quite happy in their old traditional riches and an occasional chafing against minor oppressions is never fanned in them into the flame of revolt. In Rabindranath, for the first time, does the feminine note make itself heard, woman awakens for the first time to a sense of her own independence, and no longer looks upon herself merely as a satellite. This note of independence, is pitched into a still bolder key in the novels of Saratchandra. In his writings woman becomes an active dynamic force thinking out her own problems and presenting her own demands in no uncertain or hesitating voice, yet

with an ineffable grace and charm of manner that no aggressiveness can destroy. In the family circle, she is easily the most influential factor, speaking with a quiet decisiveness and finality of tone that puts to shame the weak blusterings and high pitched protests of the other sex. With what consummate ease does Bijayā hold her own against the shrewd diplomacy of Rāshbihārī on the one hand and the vulgar clamorousness of his son on the other! In her, does feminine strength, in all its quiet delicacy, seem born again after centuries of eclipse and virtual extinction. And there are occasions when the revolt of woman is still more radical and reaches down to essentials. With what a disconcerting clarity of vision and a keen unfaltering sense of justice does she set about to review the relations of the sexes and demolish the false standards of values in the social scale! Abhavā in her courageous repudiation of the time-honoured sanctities of wedded loyalty—a mere empty shell in which the core of love is never germinated—strikes this note of revolt in its most emphatic and uncompromising form; but there are others who are permeated more or less thoroughly with this revolutionary clear-sightedness.

And again what a fine inevitable loyalty do they display to that very social system and traditional scale of values against which they breathe such a poignant note of revolt! The prolonged agonised struggles of Satīś against the happiness that love would fain bring to Sābitrī's poor and starved life, the grey asceticism that finally succeeds in quenching the hot flush of desire in Rājīlakṣmī are due to the deep ineradicable instincts implanted in the very core of their moral nature by that spiritual discipline and culture which evoke their most passionate protests. It is this involuntary instinctive loyalty to an ancient tradition that invests the problems of their lives with such a baffling complexity and marks them off from their sisters in the West in whom the promptings of passion are not arrested to the same extent by deep-seated inner scruples. It is impossible to predict just now how exactly the New Woman in Bengal would shape herself and what would be the natural accents of her speech. There is a strong force moving in the contrary direction and striving to heal the cleavage with ancient ideals, an effort to send woman back to her old place in the home and society with a quickened realisation of its beauty and dignity—embodied with a singular attractiveness and grace in the works of the orthodox school of women novelists headed by Nīupama Debi and Anurupa Debi. This would undoubtedly be a factor to reckon with and the modern woman must need come to terms with what is best and most valuable in her past heritage. But after all these concessions to and reconciliations with the past, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that Saratchandra would be the most potent moulding force for her. The New Woman, when she definitely emerges, must absorb, in a very considerable degree, the substance of Saratchandra's thoughts and outlook on life, and must speak in a language the inner rhythm of which will have been very largely determined by his influence and example.

And, above all, one cannot but be struck with the quality of mind and thought presented by the work of Saratchandra as a whole, quite apart from the merit of his achievements as a novelist. Here is a man who can boast of a much wider and more diversified range of experience, more subtle and penetrating powers of observation than a typical Bengali life severely tied down to the well-worn paths of respectability, could have been expected to afford. He has loitered in the outer fringes of society, its Bohemian haunts and resorts and has gathered strange wisdom and insight from his out-of-the-way 'disreputable' excursions. In the course of such wanderings he comes upon figures extremely lovable and fit to be cherished, figures whose native greatness of soul shines all the more against the tarnished background—truant boys like Indranāth, *sannyasis*<sup>1</sup> like Bajrānanda, cast aways like Sābitrī and Rājīlakṣmī. What a remarkable extension of horizon

<sup>1</sup> Ascetics

and food for meditation for the average Bengali whose sense of moral values has been pre-determined for him once for all, and who is obstinately of the opinion that 'no good can come out of Nazareth'—a Philistine of the Philistines indeed! His probing criticism of our social organisation tends to lay an unerring finger on its weak spots; yet it is a criticism tempered by sympathy and intimate comprehension of a child of the soil. If there is any society in which the need for legislating for the average member has been raised into a principle of inviolable sanctity, it is our Hindu society. Nowhere has there been less cognizance taken of, and less provision made for, the needs of an exceptional situation, the result being frequent and interminable clashes between our finer sense of justice pleading for relaxation in special cases and the inexorable general law that would follow its wonted course unheeding who are crushed beneath its chariot-wheels. It is the great merit of Saratchandra that he frequently draws our pointed attention to these lapses and anomalies; he has disturbed our self-complacency much more effectively than any other critic could have done. We are made to reflect on the great wastage, the needless cruelties, the uncharitable narrowness of judgement, the foolish insistence on trifles to the neglect of major issues that result from our mechanical compliance with social relations. Of course, to generate doubts is not to offer a solution. There is synthesis yet to be achieved between the needs of the average, and the claims of the exceptional man in the society. Restraining excesses and offering opportunities for expansion are both imperative social duties; and the most important service of Saratchandra lies in his pointing the way to such a synthesis by pleading for a greater charity and tolerance of view in our handling of the immediate problems of the hour.



# Conflict between instinct and ideal

Subodh Chandra Sen Gupta

The conflict of social ideals and intellectual convictions on the one hand and half awakened instincts on the other is the keynote of Saratchandra's best work. There is indeed a tragic duality in human life. Man's social intelligence creates certain institutions for his convenience and comfort and it is these which are the basis of his civilisation, and it is on these that society depends for its existence. The relations between sexes have been controlled and organised by means of the institution of marriage and the vicious instincts have been checked by law and justice and an elaborate code of morality. But man is not only a rational animal, he is also an animal that changes from generation to generation and that is why the institutions change and evolve too. But in this evolution which he calls Progress, he frequently makes one great mistake and it is this that he often regards the institutions as permanent and final, he forgets that really they have no finality and that they exist for man and not man for them.

Besides, there is one thing which we must never lose sight of. Man's instincts are intensely alive ; Bergson describes our inner being as *elan vital*. It is not only intensely alive, but it is also intensely mobile. Its vitality consists in its mobility, in its creative energy. There have been differences of opinion regarding the ultimate purpose of the Life Force. There are some who hold that it is nothing but a blind Will to live, others find in it a will to power and others again have discovered in it an energy to create and so on and so forth. But even if we leave the question of ultimate aim out of consideration for the moment, there is no doubt that it is constantly changing, that it never accepts anything permanently. But institutions move very slowly and very often they do not want to move at all.

The torturing conflict between instinct and ideals, between the social conscience and the personal Will is the great contradiction of life, its ultimate problem, its final enigma. This problem is as old as society and civilisation and yet it is our latest puzzle. It arose centuries ago and it has been encountered in different ways in different ages and the problem remains as acute as ever. It is the fundamental contradiction which is at the bottom of civilisation, and the answers which man has given to this problem in different ages make up his cultural history.

This far-too-well-known conflict between traditional morality and the call of the Life Force is the keynote of Saratchandra's best work. Rājlakṣmī was deeply in love with Śrīkānta, but he was not the husband which society gave her. She got him through no religious ceremony, through no social sanction. Has she any right to love him? Is her love pure? If she has not this right, if she has not the sanction either of society or of religion, what, after all, is the value of a 'morality that contradicts the deepest call of her soul? Surēś is an immoral shameless wretch lusting after the wife of a friend and the chaste wifely conscience in Achalā detested him too. But this wifely conscience with the so-called sacred relation of matrimony is a creation of the social intelligence, and is not, therefore, recognised by the profoundest instincts of the human heart. In the eye of society, Śōṇāśī, the daughter of Tārādās, is nothing but a votaress in the temple of Kali, a chaste and good girl devoted to pious works, but in the deepest recesses in her soul there is another woman whose name is Alakā, who does not care for gods, who does not believe in salvation through piety, for whom the social standards of good and evil are meaningless baffle. She had slept a good long while, but once she is awakened by the call of the Life Force, who shall resist her?

In his earlier novels, Saratchandra drew pictures of agonising conflict between personal instinct and social ideals. In his latest novel *Śēṣ Prasna*, the personal instincts have become militant. They have left their slumbering shyness and want to reconstruct society on a new basis. Kamal is the heroine of this novel. She does not surrender, she is not tortured by the duality of her nature. She asserts, argues, denounces.

If we analyse the first portion of her life, we will find that she has been very slightly touched, if she has been touched at all, by social ideas of good and evil, and she starts her life with a very open mind. The daughter of a European planter and an unchaste Bengali widow, herself the widow of an Assamese Christian and later on the consort of a Professor dismissed from service for low morals, what ideals should she accept? She denounces the past, has a healthy contempt for old ideals, especially Indian ideals, and she thinks that her only duty is to obey the call of her Inner Being. "I do not assert", says she, "that austere fidelity has no meaning or value, but I do think that this virtue does not deserve the credit which for centuries man has paid it. The immobile morality which compels me to be faithful for all times to the man whom once I happened to fall in love with is neither healthy nor beautiful." People have from time immemorial sung the praises of Hindu widows, their self-sacrifice and chastity, but Kamal has found in their lip nothing but misguided devotion to an ideal that does not exist. Her standards of right or wrong are also wonderfully anarchical. "It is," says she to Ajit, "my firm conviction that morality consists in accepting the little that falls to my share.....Neither happiness nor sorrow is real, my dear Ajit Bābu. The only reality is in the vital moving of moments, in the rhythm created by the motion of life. True possession consists in accepting it with all one's heart and mind." To such a person womanly chastity is a false ideal and that is why her mother's immoralities appeared to her only as aberrations of taste. She accepted Śibnāth as her consort because she was charmed by his beauty and accomplishments, but she did not care to cement the relationship by means of an elaborate legal ceremonial. She never bothered about the legality of the external ceremony. And when Śibnāth broke away from her, when their love was rudely shattered, she did not protest, she did not complain before anyone. In the land of emotional relationships the decree is always *ex parte*. Though she was put to endless privation on account of Śibnāth, she only blessed him and wished that Manōramā might find in him a better partner than she had found.

This is Kamal, a royal anarchist against all ideals of the past. She happened to come in touch with certain persons—Āśu Bābu, Akṣaya, Abināś, Harēndra, Satīś, Ajit, Manōramā

and Nilimā—all of whom had an inner affinity in this that they all accepted the social standards of good and evil and acclaimed the old Indian view of life.

Kamal carried on the incessant controversy with these votaries of the traditional morality and everyone excepting Rājendra joined with keen verbal contests. This controversy could never have had any end, but it was effectively decided by the inner emotions of the personages. Those who stood for the traditional ideals of chastity and lifelong fidelity were conquered not by Kamal's arguments but by the call which came to them from the deepest recesses of their heart. Manōramā is a cultured girl and has nothing but abhorrence for everything that is low, and she has quarrelled with her father for the courtesy that he extended to the drunkard Śibnāth. But as soon as the beauty and accomplishments of this drunkard made their irresistible appeal to the deepest corner of her heart, all her old memories were at once obliterated and the ideals she had adored so long appeared to be empty. She had waited for Ajit for four long years and loved him when he was away from her ; but it was when he was near her that he was completely banished out of her mind. The same thing applies in the case of Ajit too. In far away England, he could keep his affection unbedimmed, but as soon as he was possessed with an unconquerable love for Kamal, he had to bid goodbye to all his culture, all his professions of pure, unfaltering, unchangeable love. If the call comes to you once, nothing will resist it—neither culture, nor religion, nor tradition, for no culture has any value in a region which is too personal, too profound to have any ideal but its own inner longings. Thus Kamal's case is proved by those who contradicted her, and the irony consists in this that one of these two persons was her own husband and it was to her that the other made his proposals of love. And yet this young man and this young woman who had drifted away from the path of rectitude had been betrothed to each other ; this is after all the value of institutions and herein is the vaunted glory of so-called traditional ideals.

Again, Nilimā's life furnishes a proof for Kamal's contention that chastity as an ideal is unhealthy, inglorious and futile. If we turn from these individual experiences to the 'Asram' where these ideals were supposed to be practised on a large scale, we find that there too the experiment breaks down as a hopeless failure.

. Another man in this group acknowledges his defeat before Kamal, though in a different way. It is the great puritan Akṣaya who wanted to purify Agra by denouncing Śibnāth and Kamal whom he abused and insulted mercilessly. But in the end it is this Akṣaya who humbly bows down before our heroine, invites her to his house, and makes piteous appeal to her to remember him. Here too Kamal does not force him to do anything ; it is in his heart of hearts that he feels that the ideals which he stood for are absolutely empty and that salvation will not come through negation. Life has to be conquered ; it will yield itself to the royal victor who wins it, not to the tottering weakling who is afraid of it. Life slumbers. Feeling is the masculine force that rouses it to activity.

It is in this way that all the opponents of Kamal were humbled. She, however, not only conquers, but is herself humbled too. She boldly proclaims that she does not believe in the past, in its tradition or ideals. She claims that as soon as she has passed through an experience she is free from its bondage. But she cannot easily forget the happiness which she got from Śibnāth, and when he parts from her, it is a hard wrench and this parting leaves its painful memory behind. Whenever she has referred to this deserter of a husband, she has done so in a sense of disappointment ; a nameless indefinable agony creeps into her whenever she remembers him. It is the tragedy of man's life that these emotions are free but his conscious intelligence is burdened with the memory of the past. And it is the accumulated memories of the race that constitute tradition. If man has to exist as he is, he can escape neither his own memories nor the traditions of the



race. The novel does not give us many pictures of the married life of Śibnāth and Śibāni, but we feel nonetheless that it is gloriously happy. The new life which she starts in the company of Ajit may be happier still, but it lacks the glorious brightness of the old relationship. It is pitifully tender : the old painful memories of Kamal have dimmed its lustre. Kamal claims that she has not made any complaint ; she has not spread an atmosphere of gloom after that painful parting. This is no doubt true, but though outwardly there has been no complaint, though no divorce proceedings have been drawn, yet the fact remains that her robust optimism has been rudely checked. When she accepts Ajit, her old cheerfulness is gone. She has even consented to make the relationship permanent, and though she has eschewed the ceremony and the name, the new ceremony cannot be distinguished from conventional marriage ; for she has accepted the fundamental principle of matrimony, namely permanence of relationship. She has her memories of the past, and she wants to build her heaven of the future—this is what at first she derided as servility to tradition and miles apart from that rhythm of movement which she pronounced to be the only reality of life. It is in this way that Kamal has been humbled and been made to follow the beaten track of life.

Kamal broached this question before the anarchist Rājēn who has tried to meet it in a queer way. What he wants to say is undoubtedly worthy of the mighty man of action which he is, but it does not solve the problem. Even if we leave aside the question of unity amongst different men, we cannot ignore the duality which tortures the individual soul. The question that did not occur to Sabyasāchī may disturb Sumitrā, the duality which Rājēn was not conscious of might break the heart of a softer man like Ajit. Action is never complete in itself, it is a means to an end and there must always be disputes concerning the end. There is no way of escape out of the enigma. Rājēn has ignored the problem, not solved it.

Then, is there no solution of the problem ? We must remember one thing. It is this that man is only a step in the evolution of the Life Force. Creation has no beginning, no end. Many species have become extinct and man is only the latest experiment of the Life Force whose creative energy is incessant. He is full of imperfections and his final problem will be solved only when he has surpassed himself. But the fun of the situation is this that his greatness is strangely linked up with his imperfections. His greatest glory is in his conscious intelligence. A beast swims through a river while a man constructs a bridge over it. At the root of his powers there are his fully conscious intellect and his infinite curiosity. This infinite curiosity seems to be the most fundamental characteristic of the Life Force. What we call our physical desires lie deep buried in our inmost recesses where the light of conscious intelligence cannot pierce. But that is what seems to be the ultimate aim of the Life Force, to make the unconscious conscious, to rip the veil of all mystery. One does not know when this aim will be fulfilled ; but on that day there will be no contradiction between the conscious social conscience and the impulses of the heart, on that day Kamal will be able to part from Śibnāth without a wince and to accept Ajit with all her heart ; there will then be no confusion in Manōramā's heart between Śibnāth's faults and his attractions ; on that day the memories of a dead husband will not burden a widow and there will be no conflict between the desire to enjoy and the decision to denounce, between ideals of the society and the impulses of the individual. On that day the riddle will be read, the problem will be solved. But, then, Man will also cease to be Man and develop himself into Superman.

# Saratchandra's great message

Suniti Kumar Chatterji

Saratchandra Chatterji (we shall never get into the habit of referring to him as 'Doctor' Saratchandra Chatterji, although this title conferred on him the highest academic honour from one of the Universities of his native province) died at the not very advanced age of sixty-two. He was not at the pinnacle of his popularity, and had well-nigh passed the period of his maturity, when death called him away. He came to his own among his people at a comparatively late age, for, before he appeared before the public with some of his short stories about a quarter of a century ago, he was unknown to fame. Saratchandra was never hard to please—he received the warm appreciation of his genius by his countrymen in a spirit of thankfulness; and he died, full of honour and full of the sense of satisfaction that his place in the literature of his country was assured.

Saratchandra's spirit is perhaps still too near us to enable us to form a just and proper appraisal of his service to his people and of his position in the literature of Bengal and India. A great writer undoubtedly he was, and that sort of general statement will certainly be subscribed to by all including those who have not been able to agree with his literary and social ideals. It always requires a little distance to study a great figure; and that distance (in the case of a great figure in literature this is a distance in time) is just at the present moment denied to us, while the ashes of Saratchandra are hardly cold.

Saratchandra Chatterji died in 1938; just a hundred years ago, in 1838, Bankimchandra Chatterji was born, and we are preparing to hold Bankim's centenary this year as one of the makers of Bengal and one of the greatest figures of Indian literature in the nineteenth century—the man who helped us to realise the eternal glory of Mother India, among other things. These hundred years have been most fateful for the people of Bengal, as for those of the rest of India. These hundred years have, among other things, witnessed the evolution of a certain section of the comparatively leisured middle class of Bengal into an 'intelligentsia' of the modern type, which gradually weaned itself from the land and the village to the city and the professions and services. No literary man can be great unless he reflects truly the life and aspirations of his age. Bankimchandra, writing in the sixties, seventies and eighties of the last century was

bound to differ in his outlook and his attitude from Saratchandra whose literary career embraced the second, third and fourth decades of this century. Bankim's age was one of synthesis—so far as the cultural outlook of the generality of the 'English educated' classes in Bengal was concerned. The first third of the nineteenth century saw the awakening of the Indian spirit by its contact with that of Europe. This awakening was partly reactionary or conservative, as in Bhabanicharan Bapetji and Radha Kanta Deb. The second third of the nineteenth century was the age of 'Young Bengal', when a section of the young men of Bengal, intoxicated with English learning, boldly proclaimed themselves to be the spiritual sons of England, and even sought to translate their spiritual affiliation into their daily life by adopting or blindly imitating—it would not be too strong to say 'aping'—English way. Young Bengal of those days felt like a spoilt child, and neither were these young adventurers in the field of English culture acquainted with, nor did they care for the ancient culture of their ancestors. With Bankim and his contemporaries coming into the field, an atmosphere of sobriety came in, and a spirit of reasoned idealism and legitimate national pride, of which the votaries were men like Bankimchandra Chatterji, and Bhudeb Mukherji and later Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore, among others. There was a frank and free admission of the superiority of the West in matters like modern science where this superiority was undeniable, but at the same time there was a desire—often an easily understandable patriotic desire—to rehabilitate ancient India in her culture and her high ideals as a source of perennial inspiration and strength to Modern India. A certain amount of romantic idealism was there and this coloured the vision of Bankimchandra and others. Then again, for several decades, from the fifth to the tenth, of the last century the English educated group of Bengal had a good reason to be very much pleased with itself. As middle man in the work of administration and commercial transaction between the English and the people of India, from Bengal up to the Afghan Frontier, the English-knowing Bengali came to have a unique position, and at the same time, by actively taking up the work of an educator, he was also busy in disseminating all over North India the English culture and English ideals of nationalism and freedom. The educated Bengali both helped to consolidate English rule in India on the ruins of an effete Indian system and at the same time to engender and organise the revolt of India against this same English rule. There was a note of optimism, a spirit of discovering itself and its vocation, in Bengali life in the days of Bankimchandra.

But within less than half a century, all this is changed. The Bengal of Saratchandra Chatterji—the Bengal which ushered in the era of national struggle of an unprecedented intensity all over India, post-War Bengal which is faced with a complication of life and a conflict of ideals of which Bankimchandra, living in the atmosphere of an old world happy-go-lucky society with its traditions not yet divorced from life and even then going strong, could never have a conception, post-reform Bengal which is a house divided against itself with its people split up by religion and by social strata into so many mutually hostile groups—Mohammedans and 'Non-Mohammedans', 'caste Hindus' and 'scheduled castes' and so forth—present day Bengal, as we see it, is not a land of peace and happiness; it is not a land of plenty either. On the surface, we have in middle class Bengali Hindu society plenty of symptoms of a social disruption in which old ideals cannot remain intact under an altered economic and intellectual outlook; while deep within is economic distress, staring every one in the face, when the field of the professions and of the services, which for the last few generations gave to the middle class Bengali his chief venue of employment, is becoming more and more narrowed down and sometimes even wholly closed for him, without other new careers being opened out for him. We cannot have in an atmosphere like this the robust idealism of Bankimchandra, the desire to establish Bengal and India on a pinnacle of glory. The writer

who must be true to his age now must reflect the doubts and difficulties—at least in some spheres of life—that beset his people. And Saratchandra is exactly a living author in that his work embodies the social and spiritual condition of a large mass of the Bengali 'intelligentsia' and the middle class of his time.

Bankimchandra, Rabindranath and Saratchandra—these three are supreme names in the history of Bengali fiction, and the estimate of one will naturally entail a comparison with the others. But as I said at the beginning, it is as yet too early to enable such an estimate to be of value to us, because of the too close proximity of the subject. The warmth of Saratchandra's personality is still being felt, and will continue to be so felt for sometime to come, although he is no more with us; and Rabindranath fortunately for us is still spared to us, let us hope for a good many years to come. It will not be so difficult to appraise Bankimchandra, as we can see his figure looming huge and peaceful against the background of his times which we can view in the proper perspective after half a century.

Saratchandra the writer is inextricably mingled with Saratchandra the man. One reason for Saratchandra's great and spontaneous popularity with the Bengalis, for making Saratchandra 'the most beloved writer of this generation', as Rabindranath so gracefully put it in his warm tribute to the departed one, is that he, throughout his entire life and literary career, lived and thought like a middle class Bengali who felt himself to be very much one of his own people. There was in him nothing of that detached, so-called scientific approach to the problems of life and society which may ensure a certain amount of impartial observation, but which frequently defeats its own purpose by its implied assumption of superiority. Saratchandra in his stories and novels was always 'in it' whether he identified himself with the hero, or spoke as a narrator; there was no mistake that he was very much interested in the plot, in the characters and in the problems. This gave a certain warmth to all his writings, which could not but bring him close to his readers. And in this, Saratchandra simply gave an expression, quite unconsciously though, to the innate democracy of the Hindu society through the institution of caste, for, within the caste there is equality, and each caste had its own place which was jealously guarded, and a true Hindu who lived the old fashioned life in the village could not think of a supercilious detached attitude to any question if he lived as a member of his village society.

Saratchandra was, above all, a Lover of Man. The *Mahābhārata* has said: "Guhyam brahma tad idam bho brabimi—na manuṣyāḥ śreṣṭhātaram hi kiñchit" (Santiparvam, XII, 229, verse 20), i.e. "this is the secret doctrine that I announce to you—there is nothing higher than man". This sentiment has been echoed by the *Sahajiya* mystic of mediaeval Bengal, whose oft quoted line, attributed to Chandidas, is known to every Bengali. This age-old faith of India in the superiority of man over everything—over man-made laws and institutions, taboos and injunctions—found a most sympathetic and a systematic supporter in Saratchandra. It is, of course, possible to discuss how far the implications of this idea are constant with social discipline and social well-being. But Saratchandra's approach to the question was that of one who felt for the suffering humanity, suffering for its own folly and its own weaknesses as well as for the effete and unmeaning restrictions and prejudices of society, both sanctioned by blind adherence to the letter of scriptures and supported by the petty meannesses and perversities of human nature.

Saratchandra was a master stylist in Bengali. Without much of a formal education, his genius as a writer of Bengal made him the wielder of a fine, nervous and highly expressive Bengali which was true to its native spirit in both idiom and vocabulary and was the joy of his countrymen who could appreciate good and idiomatic Bengali. At the present

moment in Bengal, there is anarchy (particularly among a certain class of young writers) in the idiom they sport in writing their mother tongue. The passing away of Saratchandra has removed one good exemplar of Bengali, pure and undefiled, from our midst. Saratchandra was fully alive to his responsibilities as a writer of his mother tongue, and would weigh each new expression that he thought necessary for his purpose. The present writer remembers one occasion when Saratchandra discussed with him the meanings and nuances of a particular word which he wished to introduce in a story he was then writing. Saratchandra eschewed the purely prety and the melodramatically romantic in his works; and yet there is no lack of romance in his stories. But taking all in all, what a splendid and a varied gallery of characters his stories and novels unfold! We have a veritable *comédie humaine* here and a plentiful one. And his characters have life in them. Whether we like them or not, we cannot but feel interested in them, and frequently their vitality and vigour, their truth and intent are arresting. This fact has been amply demonstrated by the successful dramatisation of some of his well-known works. And here one must say that Saratchandra was singularly happy in getting a dramatic exponent of the type of Sisir Kumar Bhaduri. I think Saratchandra's popularity as a novelist was not a little strengthened by the very remarkable staging of some of his novels by Sisir Kumar Bhaduri and his troupe. I know many people who took to reading him over again after having seen the very successful series of Saratchandra's dramas on the Bengali stage. It was quite an intellectual pleasure to see such fine translation into flesh and blood of Saratchandra's creations whom we all know to be living characters.

In our study of a great or popular national figure, we ought to eschew personal factors as much as possible. Yet it is often difficult to dissociate the private individual from the public man; and sometimes it is neither possible nor desirable. The present writer came to know Saratchandra, like thousands of other Bengalis, through his writings; and he was fortunate in being personally known to him, and even (as he flatters himself) in winning some amount of personal affection. I first met Saratchandra when he was living at Sibpur, and since then I had numerous occasions of meeting him in public and private. One thing immediately noticeable about him: he was so unaffected and so easily accessible to all—it was the most natural thing for him to be the 'dada' or 'elder brother' to so many people, young and old, men and women. He carried in his person a bit of the old atmosphere of the Bengali countryside, when everybody, irrespective of caste or creed, was in some sort of make-believe relationship to every other body. He lived and moved in an atmosphere of pure Bengalidom, with the long 'snake' or pipe to his *hukka* reclining on his bolster upon his *faras* in his drawing room in the typical Bengali style and he would charm his friends and visitors by the geniality of his personality.

Saratchandra did not assume the role of a teacher, although he taught his people to keep their eyes open, and to see things and to see them in their true perspectives. He painted out to us, in a poignant manner, our individual follies and foibles, the pettinesses and hypocrisies of our life and society. He diagnosed the disease, but he did not take upon himself the burden of suggesting a remedy. As an observer and artist, that was not his work. In his sympathy for erring humanity, it is natural for him to be misunderstood. Possibly there was over-emphasis, or needless double underlining in some matters. He was more busy with the facts as they presented themselves to him and to most of us, rather than with the ideals. It is necessary to face facts, for that leads to introspection, and then alone can we set about realising the ideal in all earnestness. Above all, Saratchandra's great message was Love of Man as Man, with all his weaknesses and imperfections, and this message in these days of rampant communalism and a sense of caste-pride and exclusiveness which is so hard to kill, both of which are stalking the land like spectres and making a hell of this fair land of Bengal, we require most as a guiding principle in our lives.

# আদর্শ মানব শরৎচন্দ্র

সুভাষচন্দ্র বসু

করাচীতে অবতরণ করিবামাত্রই আমি ভারতবর্ষে উপন্যাস-সম্রাট শরৎচন্দ্রের স্বর্গারোহণের শোকসংবাদ পাইলাম। জানিতাম, কিছুদিন হইতেই তিনি অসুস্থ। কিন্তু এমন কথা ভাবি নাই, তিনি এত শীঘ্র আমাদের পরিত্যাগ করিবেন। শেষবার যখন তাঁহার সহিত দেখা করিতে যাই তখন তাঁহাকে অতিশয় প্রফুল্ল ও প্রাণময় দেখিয়াছিলাম। কিন্তু তাঁহার অন্তিমকাল এত নিকটে ইহা স্বপ্নেও কল্পনা করি নাই। শরৎচন্দ্র বাংলাসাহিত্যের যে আসনে প্রতিষ্ঠিত ছিলেন দীর্ঘকাল তাহা শূন্য থাকিবে। বাংলায় এমন কোন পরিবার নাই যেখানকার আবালবৃদ্ধ নরনারীর নিকটে তিনি পবিচিত ও সমাদৃত নহেন।

কিন্তু কেবলমাত্র অন্যতম শ্রেষ্ঠ সাহিত্যিককে হারাইয়াই যে আমবা শোকাভিভূত হইয়াছি তাহা নহে, শোকপ্রকাশের অপর কারণ—তিনি ছিলেন কংগ্রেসের একটি শক্তিশ্রুত। অসহযোগ আন্দোলনের প্রথম হইতেই তিনি বাংলার কংগ্রেসে যোগদান করেন। তাঁহার প্রেরণা তিন হাওড়া জিলায় বিতরণ করিয়াছেন, সেখানে তাঁহার অভাব বিশেষভাবেই অনুভূত হইবে।

তাঁহার সহিত আমার অতি ঘনিষ্ঠ বন্ধু ছিল। আমার বেদনা অত্যন্ত অতি গভীর। তাঁহার মৃত্যুতে আমার ব্যক্তিগত ক্ষতি যে পরিমাণ হইল তাহা কোন দিনই পূর্ণ হইবে না।

শরৎচন্দ্র শুমু সাহিত্যিকই ছিলেন না, রাজনীতিকক্ষেত্রেও তাঁহার দান ছিল এবং সেই সুবাদেই ১৯২১ খৃষ্টাব্দে শরৎচন্দ্রের সহিত আমার প্রথম পরিচয় ঘটিয়াছিল।

মহাত্মা গান্ধীর নেতৃত্বে ভারতবাসী অসহযোগ আন্দোলন প্রবর্তিত হইলে শরৎচন্দ্র সেই আন্দোলনে যোগদান করেন। কলিকাতায় এই সময়ে যে জাতীয় বিদ্যাপীঠ প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয় শরৎচন্দ্র তাহার অন্যতম উদ্যোক্তা ছিলেন। এই সময়ে একদিনের কথা আমার মনে আছে; একজন প্রসিদ্ধ সাহিত্যিক শরৎচন্দ্রকে বলিলেন : ‘কলম ছাড়িয়া রাজনীতিকের দলে ভিড়িয়া পড়া সাহিত্যিকের কর্তব্য নহে।’ শরৎচন্দ্র তাহাতে হাসিয়া বলেন : ‘আমি কিন্তু কিছু দিনের জন্য কলম ছাড়িয়া চরকাই ধরিয়াছি।’

শরৎচন্দ্রের এই উক্তির অর্থ ছিল এই যে, দেশমাতা যখন বিপন্ন তখন ব্যক্তিগত সমুদয় চিন্তা ও অভ্যাস পরিত্যাগ করিয়া তাঁহার রক্ষার অবতীর্ণ হওয়াই সন্তানের কর্তব্য। দেশমাতৃকার প্রতি আন্তরিক প্রীতি তাঁহাতে আমরণ বিদ্যমান ছিল। বহু বৎসর যাবৎ তিনি নিখিল ভারত রাষ্ট্রীয় সমিতির ও বঙ্গীয় প্রাদেশিক রাষ্ট্রীয় সমিতির সদস্য এবং হাওড়া জেলা কংগ্রেস কমিটির সভাপতি ছিলেন। ভারতের স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রামের সহিত তাঁহার ঘনিষ্ঠ যোগাযোগ ছিল। লাজুক ছিলেন বলিয়া তিনি সভ্যসমিতিতে বড় একটা যোগ দেন নাই বটে, কিন্তু সংশ্লিষ্ট যুবকেরা তাঁহার নিকট হইতে অনেক প্রেরণা লাভ করিয়াছে। স্বদেশপ্রেমিক শরৎচন্দ্রের এই দিকটার পবিত্র আঙ্গুর তবুগেরা তেমন জানে না। তাঁহার মন ছিল চিরসবুজ—তবুগ বাংলার আশা-আকাঙ্ক্ষার প্রতি তাঁহার পূর্ণ সহানুভূতি ছিল। যতদিন তিনি জীবিত ছিলেন, সরকার ও পুলিশ তাঁহার প্রতি তীক্ষ্ণ দৃষ্টি রাখিত। তাঁহার ‘পথের দাবী’ নামক বিখ্যাত গ্রন্থ বাজেয়াপ্ত হইয়াছিল—তিনি কারাবদ্ধ হন নাই, ইহা বিশ্বাসের বিষয়। কারাবাসজনিত অভিজ্ঞতা লাভ করিলে সেই অভিজ্ঞতা দ্বারা তাঁহার সাহিত্য আবও সমৃদ্ধ হইতে পারিত। সমাজে যাহারা বঞ্চিত ও উপদ্রুত, তাঁহাদের প্রতি সমবেদনাই শরৎসাহিত্যের সর্বাপেক্ষা বড় প্রেবণা। নিঃস্বপ্ন জীবন তিনি দুঃখদৈন্য ও পরীক্ষার মধ্য দিয়া অতিবাহিত করিয়াছেন বলিয়াই এই প্রেরণা লাভ করিয়াছেন। জীবনের এই কঠোর পবীক্ষায় যাহারা মুহূর্ত্তমাত্র হইয়া পড়েন, শরৎচন্দ্র তাঁহাদের দলে ছিলেন না। তিনি ছিলেন একজন বিদ্রোহী, তাঁহার সাহিত্যের মধ্য দিয়া জাতির যুবসমাজের নিকট এই বিদ্রোহের বাণীই তিনি ছড়াইয়াছেন। সত্যের প্রতি অটুট নিষ্ঠা তাঁহার সাহিত্যে সত্যপ্রচারের প্রেরণা যোগাইয়াছে।

আমাদের দেশে, বিশেষভাবে বাংলার, হাস্যরসের বড় অভাব। শরৎসাহিত্যে এই হাস্যরসের প্রাধান্য দেখা যায়। দুঃখদৈন্য তাঁহাকে বিচলিত করিতে পারিত না বলিয়াই ঘোরতর দুর্দশা বর্ণনাকালেও তিনি হাস্যরসের নিকর বহাইয়াছেন। এতগুলি গুণ একজন মানুষের সচরাচর সম্ভব হয়না—একাধারে তিনি ছিলেন একজন আদর্শ লেখক, আদর্শ দেশপ্রেমিক ও সর্বোপরি আদর্শ মানব।

.....সাহিত্যাচার্য শরৎচন্দ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায়ের অকালমৃত্যুতে ভারতের সাহিত্যগগন হইতে একটি অতুল্য জ্যোতিষ্ক খসিয়া পড়িল। যদিও বহুবর্ষ তাঁহার নাম বাংলার ঘরেঘরেই শ্রুতি পরিচিত ছিল, তথাপি তিনি ভারতের সাহিত্যজগতেও কম পরিচিত ছিলেন না। সাহিত্যিক হিসাবে শরৎচন্দ্র বড় ছিলেন বটে, কিন্তু দেশপ্রেমিক হিসাবে তিনি ছিলেন আরও বড়। তাঁহার মৃত্যুতে বাংলার কংগ্রেসের সমুদয় ক্ষতি হইয়াছে।

# Saratchandra : The ideal man

Subhas Chandra Bose

Immediately upon my landing at Karachi, I heard the sad news of the passing away of Saratchandra—the doyen of Indian fictional literature. I knew he had been ill for sometime. But it never occurred to me that he would leave us so soon. The last time I went to see him I found him extremely gay and lively. I could not imagine even in my dream that his end was so near. The place Saratchandra occupied in the sphere of Bengali literature will remain empty for a long time to come. There is not a family in Bengal whose members, children and the old alike, do not know or love Saratchandra.

We are overwhelmed with grief not only because we have lost one of the greatest litterateurs, the other reason for it is that he was a pillar of the Congress. He had been with the Congress of Bengal since the early days of the Non-Cooperation movement. He has left his greatest contributions in the Howrah district where his absence will be deeply felt.

I had an intimate and deep friendship with him. My pain today is indeed too deep. The magnitude of loss I have personally suffered at his death will never be compensated.

Saratchandra was not only a litterateur, he had contributions in the field of politics too. And it was in this connection that I was acquainted with him in 1921.

Saratchandra joined the countrywide Non-Cooperation movement when it was initiated under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. He was also one of the pioneers of the National College which was established at that time in Calcutta. I can recollect an incident of a day of that period. An eminent writer told Saratchandra: 'It is not the duty of a litterateur to put away the pen and join the band of politicians.' At this, Saratchandra laughed and came out with his retort: 'But I have actually put away my pen and opted for the *Charka*<sup>1</sup> for some time at least.'

What Saratchandra meant by his retort was that when the motherland was endangered, it was the duty of her sons to come out in her defence, giving up all private contemplations

<sup>1</sup> Spinning wheel (hand-driven). Congressmen, in those days, had taken to it to practise self-reliance.



and practices. This sincere love for the motherland was resplendent in him till his last breath. For many years he was a member of the All India Committee and the Bengal Provincial Committee of the Congress and was the president of the Howrah District Committee. He had a close link with the freedom struggle of India. Although, being shy in nature, he did not often attend public meetings, the youths connected with such activities drew much inspiration from him.

Young people today are not much aware about this aspect of Saratchandra, the patriot. His mind was evergreen ; and he had the fullest sympathy for the hopes and aspirations of young Bengal. The Government and the police had a keen, watchful eye on him as long as he lived. His famous novel *Pathēr Dābī* was proscribed, and it is a wonder he was not imprisoned. His writings might have been enriched more by his experience of prison life, had he gone through it. A deep sympathy for the outcasts and the oppressed masses of the society has been the greatest inspiration behind the works of Saratchandra. He could draw this inspiration since he passed his own life through distress, sorrows and ordeals. Saratchandra was not one of those who are confounded in the face of these ordeals of life. He was a rebel. And it is the message of revolt that he has preached among the youths of our nation through his writings. His deep attachment to truth has always inspired him to preach it through his works.

In our country, particularly in Bengal, humour is something too rare. In Saratchandra's works we find it in abundance. Since sufferings and poverty could never unsettle him, he could keep his stream of humour flowing even while describing the darkest of sufferings. An assemblage of so many virtues in a man is indeed rare. He was an exemplary writer, a noble patriot at the same time, and, above all, an ideal man.

...With the premature demise of the literary doyen, Sri Saratchandra Chattopadhyay, one of the brightest stars has fallen from the firmament of Indian literature. Though for several years his identity was confined to the homes of Bengal alone, he was not less known in the literary world of the whole country. No doubt he was a great literary genius ; but he was greater still as a noble patriot. The Congress in Bengal has suffered an irredeemable loss at his death.

*Translated by Ujjal Bose*

# শরৎ গ্ৰন্থাম

নজরুল ইসলাম

সেদিন দেখেছি আকাশের লোভা  
শরৎচন্দ্র তিলকে ।  
শূন্যগগন বিসাদমগন  
সে তিলক মুঁড়ি দিল কে ॥

অবমাননার অতল গহরে যে মানুষ ছিল লুকায়,  
শরৎ-চাঁদের জ্যোৎস্না তাদের দিল রাজপথ দেখায়,  
জগতে আজিকে চলে অভিযান তাদেরই তীর আলোকে ॥  
ভীষ্ম গুঠনতলে যে নারীর প্রাণশিখা জি-৭ নিভিয়া  
স্তমিত সে প্রাণ উঠিল জলিয়া সে চাঁদে জ্যোতিঃ লভিয়া  
সে চাঁদ কোথায়, কোটি আঁখিদীপ খুঁজিয়া ফিরিছে ত্রিলোকে ॥  
পৃথিবীর চাঁদ অস্ত গিয়াছে, আলো তার প্রতি ভবনে  
তেজপ্রদীপ্ত তেমনি জলিছে, নিভিবে না তাহা পবনে  
ঝরবে তাহার রসধারা চির-অমরাবতীর শ্রীলোকে ॥

# Homage to Saratchandra

Nazrul Islam

The other day saw I  
The azure brow of the sky  
Aglow with the autumnal moon<sup>1</sup> ;  
Grief envelops now  
The bare murky brow—  
At whose bidding so soon ?  
Scions of human race  
Sunk in deep disgrace  
Viewed Life's highway  
By the clear moonlight ;  
With restored right  
In triumph marched away.  
The timid feminine heart  
Received a glowing spurt  
From the moon's vital rays ;  
A million eyes with tears  
Now scan the spheres  
The vanished moon to trace.  
The earthly moon has set  
Holding in silvery net  
Palaces and hovels and huts ;  
The ambrosial rays  
With heavenly grace  
Will glitter in human hearts.

*Translated by Ashim Mukhopadhyay*

<sup>1</sup> The literal meaning of the personal name Saratchandra ( Śaratchandra ) is 'autumnal moon'.

# A Portrait



Of himself, Saratchandra spoke or wrote very little. Only on occasion he would refer incidentally to himself while addressing audiences. We have to content ourselves with these fleeting glimpses of his life. Some such occasional self thoughts of the writer have been culled here to give the accompanying composition an autobiographical semblance.

The first portion of this 'life story', comprising the first eight paragraphs in English (first six in Bengali), is taken from the address given by the writer as the president of the literary conference held to celebrate the seventieth birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore in the Town Hall, Calcutta, in December, 1931. The address was included in the Volume entitled *Jayanti Utsarga* published by the 'Rabindra Pauchava Sabha' in the same year.

The second portion is a statement in English by the writer, which was quoted in the introduction to the first English translation of *Śrīkānta, Part One* published by the Oxford University Press in 1922. A Bengali translation of it was published in the Bengali weekly *Batavan* (now extinct) in the memorial issue *Sarat Smṛti Sankhyā* published after his death in 1314 B.S. (1938).

The concluding portion, comprising paragraphs ten and eleven in English (nine and ten in Bengali) has been taken from the writer's reply to the felicitations given by the citizens and writers on the occasion of his fiftyseventh birthday, 1339 B.S. (1932), in the Town Hall, Calcutta. It was published in the Kirtik issue of the *Bharatbarsa*, 1339 B.S. (1932).

A short chronology of the significant events of his life appears at the end of this part. It should be mentioned here that many facts of his life still remain unknown and controversies even on some of the known events are still alive. In preparing this chronology we have drawn upon the several existing biographies of the writer and have indicated the possibly doubtful dates.

Bangabani, Banglar Katha, Benu, Bharatbarsa, Bharati, Bichitra, Masik Swadesh Narayan Sahitya, and Yamuna are names of Bengali periodicals



# বাত্মচরিত

শরৎচন্দ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায়

ছেলেবেলাব কথা মনে আছে। পাড়াগাঁয়ে মাছ ধ'রে, ডোঙা ঠেলে, নৌকা বেয়ে দিন কাটে, বৈচিত্র্যেব লোভে মাঝে মাঝে যাত্রার দলে সাগবেদি করি, তাব আনন্দ ও আরাম যখন পরিপূর্ণ হ'য়ে ওঠে তখন গামছা কাঁধে নিরুদ্দেশযাত্রায় বার হই। ঠিক বিশ্বকবিব কাব্যের নিরুদ্দেশযাত্রা নয়, একটু আলাদা। সেটা শেষ হ'লে আবার একদিন ক্তবিক্তত পায় নিজীব দেহে ঘরে ফিরে আসি। আদর-অভ্যর্থনার পালা শেষ হ'লে অভিভাবকেরা পুনরায় বিদ্যালয়ে চালান ক'রে দেন। সেখানে আর এক দফা সঙ্কীর্ণতা লাভের পর আবার বোধোদয়, পদ্যপাঠে মনোনিবেশ করি। আবার একদিন প্রতিজ্ঞা ভুলি, আবার দুষ্ট সরস্বতী কাঁধে চাপে, আবার সাগরেদি সুস্থ করি, আবার নিরুদ্দেশযাত্রা, আবার ফিরে আসা, আবার তেমনি তাদের আপ্যায়ন সঙ্কীর্ণাব ঘটনা—এমনি ক'রে বোধোদয়, পদ্যপাঠ ও বালাজীবনের এক অধ্যায় সমাপ্ত হ'ল।

এলাম সহরে, একমাত্র বোধোদয়ের নজিরে গুরুজনেরা ভাঁতি ক'রে দিলেন ছাত্রবৃত্তি ক্রাসে : তার পাঠা—সীতার বনবাস, চান্দুপাঠ, সত্তাবশতক ও মন্ত্র মোটা ব্যাকরণ। এশুধু প'ড়ে যাওয়া নয়, মাসিকে সাপ্তাহিকে সমালোচনা লেখা নয়, এ পণ্ডিতের কাছে মুখোমুখি দাঁড়িয়ে প্রতিদিন পরীক্ষা দেওয়া। সুতরাং অসঙ্কোচ বলা চলে যে, সাহিত্যের সঙ্গে আমার প্রথম পরিচয় ঘটলো চোখের জলে। তার পরে দুঃখে আর একদিন সে মিয়াদও কাটলো। তখন ধারণাও ছিল না যে, মানুষকে দুঃখ দেওয়া ছাড়া সাহিত্যের আর কোন উদ্দেশ্য আছে।

যে পবিবারে আমি মানুষ, সেখানে কাব্য উপন্যাস দুর্নীতির নামাস্তর, সঙ্গীত অস্পষ্ট। সেখানে সবাই চায় পাশ করতে, এবং উকীল হতে। এরি মাঝখানে আমার দিন কেটে চলে। কিন্তু হঠাৎ একদিন এর মাঝেও বিপর্যয় ঘটলো। আমার এক আত্মীয় তখন বিদেশে থেকে কলেজে পড়তেন, তিনি এলেন বাড়ী। তাঁর ছিল সঙ্গীতে অনুরাগ, কাব্যে আসক্তি; বাড়ীর মেয়েদের জড় ক'রে তিনি একদিন প'ড়ে শোনান রবীন্দ্রনাথের 'প্রকৃতির প্রতিশোধ'। কে কতটা বুঝলে জানিনে কিন্তু যিনি পড়ছিলেন তাঁর সঙ্গে আমার গোথোও জল এল। কিন্তু পাছে দুর্বলতা প্রকাশ পায়, এই লজ্জায় তাড়াতাড়ি বাইরে চ'লে এলাম। কিন্তু কাব্যের সঙ্গে দ্বিতীয়বার পরিচয় ঘটলো,



এবং বেশ মনে পড়ে এইবারে পেলাম তার প্রথম সত্য পরিচয়। এর পরে এ বাড়ীর উকীল হবার কঠোর নিয়ম-সংখ্যম আর খাতে সইল না; আবার ফিরতে হ'লো আমাদের সেই পুরোনো পল্লীভবনে। কিন্তু এবাব আর বোধোদয় নয়, বাবার ডাক্তার দেবরাজ থেকে খুঁজে বের করলাম 'হরিদাসের গুপ্তকথা' আর বেরোলো 'ভবানী পাঠক'। গুরুজনদের দোষ দিতে পারিনে, জ্বলের পাঠ্য তো নয়, ওগুলো বদছেলের অপাঠ্য পুস্তক। তাই পড়বার ঠাই ক'রে নিতে হ'লো আমাকে বাড়ীর গোয়ালঘরে। সেখানে আমি পড়ি, তারা শোনে। এখন আর পড়িনে, লিখি। সেগুলো কারা পড়ে জানিনে। একই জ্বলে বেশী দিন পড়লে বিদ্যা হয় না, মাস্টারমশাই রেহবশে একদিন এই ইঙ্গিতটুকু দিলেন। অতএব আবার ফিরতে হ'ল সহরে। বলা ভাল, এর পরে আর জ্বল বদলাবার প্রয়োজন হয়নি। এইবার খবর পেলাম বস্কিমচন্দ্রের গ্রন্থাবলীর। উপন্যাস-সাহিত্যে এর পরেও যে কিছু আছে তখন ভাবতেও পারতাম না। প'ড়ে প'ড়ে বইগুলো যেন মুখস্থ হ'য়ে গেল। বোধ হয়, এ আমার একটা দোষ। এক অনুকরণের চেষ্টা না করেছি যে নয়; লেখার দিক দিয়ে সেগুলো একেবারে বার্থ হয়েছে। কিন্তু চেষ্টার দিক দিয়ে তার সপ্তয় মনের মধ্যে আজও অনুভব করি।

তার পরে এল বঙ্গদর্শনের নবপর্ষদের যুগ; রবীন্দ্রনাথের 'চোখের বালি' তখন ধারাবাহিক প্রকাশিত হচ্ছে। ভাষা ও প্রকাশভঙ্গীর একটা নূতন আলো এসে যেন চোখে পড়ল। সেদিনের সে গভীর ও সূতীক্ল আনন্দের স্মৃতি আমি কোনদিন ভুলব না। কোন কিছু যে এমন ক'রে বলা যায়, অপরের কল্পনার ছবিতে নিজের মনটাকে যে পাঠক এমন চোখ দিয়ে দেখতে পার, এর পূর্বে কখনো স্বপ্নেও ভাবিনি। এত দিনে শুধু কেবল সাহিত্যের নয়, নিজেরও যেন একটা পরিচয় পেলাম। অনেক পড়লেই যে তবে অনেক পাওয়া যায়, একথা সত্য নয়। ওইতো খানকয়েক পাতা, তার মধ্য দিয়ে যিনি এত বড় সম্পদ সেদিন আমাদের হাতে পৌঁছে দিলেন, তাঁকে কৃতজ্ঞতা জানাবার ভাষা পাওয়া যাবে কোথায়?

এর পরেই সাহিত্যের সঙ্গে হ'ল আমার ছাড়াছাড়ি, জ্বলেই গেলাম যে, জীবনে একটা ছয়ও কোন দিন লিখেছি। দীর্ঘকাল কাটলো প্রবাসে, ইতিমধ্যে কবিকে কেন্দ্র ক'রে কি ক'রে যে নবীন বাংলা সাহিত্য দ্রুতবেগে সমৃদ্ধিতে ভ'রে উঠলো আমি তার কোন খবরই জানিনে। কবির সঙ্গে কোনদিন ঘনিষ্ঠ হবারও সৌভাগ্য ঘটেনি, তাঁর কাছে ব'সে সাহিত্যের শিক্ষা গ্রহণেরও সুযোগ পাইনি, আমি ছিলাম একেবারে বিচ্ছিন্ন। এইটা হ'ল বাইরের সত্য, কিন্তু অন্তরের সত্য সম্পূর্ণ বিপরীত। সেই বিদেশে আমার সঙ্গে ছিল কবির খানকয়েক বই—কাব্য ও সাহিত্য—এবং মনের মধ্যে ছিল পরম প্রজ্ঞা ও বিশ্বাস। তখন ঘুরে ঘুরে ওই ক'খানা বই-ই বারবার ক'রে পড়েছি—কি তার ছন্দ, ক'টা তার অক্ষর, কাকে বলে art, কি তার সংজ্ঞা, ওজন মিলিয়ে কোথাও কোন দুটি ঘটেছে কি না—এসব বড় কথা কখনো চিন্তাও করিনি—ওসব ছিল আমার কাছে বাহুল্য। কেবল সুদৃঢ় প্রত্যয়েব আকারে মনের মধ্যে এইটুকু ছিল যে, এর চেয়ে পূর্ণতর সৃষ্টি আর কিছু হ'তেই পারে না। কি কাব্য, কি কথাসাহিত্যে, আমার ছিল এই পুঁজি।

একদিন অপ্রত্যাশিতভাবে হঠাৎ যখন সাহিত্যসেবার ডাক এল, তখন যৌবনের দাবী শেষ ক'রে প্রোফেসর এলাকায় পা দিয়েছি। দেহ শ্রান্ত, উদ্যম সীমাবদ্ধ—শেখবার বয়স পার হ'য়ে গেছে। খ্যাকি প্রবাসে, সব থেকে বিচ্ছিন্ন, সকলের কাছে অপরিচিত, কিন্তু আহ্বানে সাড়া দিলাম—ভয়ের কথা মনেই হ'ল না।

...আমার শৈশব ও যৌবন ঘোর দারিদ্র্যের মধ্য দিয়ে অতিবাহিত হয়েছে। অর্থের অভাবেই আমার শিক্ষালাভের সৌভাগ্য ঘটেনি। পিতার নিকট হ'তে অস্থির স্বভাব ও গভীর সাহিত্যানুরাগ

বাড়ীতে আমি উত্তরাধিকারসূত্রে আর কিছুই পাই নি। পিতৃদত্ত প্রথম গুণটি আমাকে বরছাড়া করেছিল—আমি অল্প বয়সেই সারা ভারত ঘুরে এলাম। আর পিতার দ্বিতীয় গুণের ফলে জীবন ভ'রে আমি কেবল স্বপ্ন দেখেই গেলাম। আমার পিতার পাণ্ডিত্য ছিল অগাধ। ছোটগল্প, উপন্যাস, নাটক, কবিতা—এক কথায় সাহিত্যের সকল বিভাগেই তিনি হাত দিয়েছিলেন, কিন্তু কোনটাই তিনি শেষ করতে পারেন নি। তাঁর লেখাগুলি আজ আমার কাছে নেই—কবে কেমন ক'রে হারিয়ে গেছে, সে কথা আজ মনে পড়ে না। কিন্তু কোনটাই তিনি শেষ করতে পারেন নি। কিন্তু এখনও স্পষ্ট মনে আছে, ছোটবেলায় কতবার তাঁর অসমাপ্ত লেখাগুলি নিয়ে ঘণ্টার পর-ঘণ্টা কাটিয়ে দিয়েছি। কেন তিনি এগুলি শেষ করে যান নি এই ব'লে কত দুঃখই না করেছি। অসমাপ্ত অংশগুলি কি হ'তে পারে ভাব'ও ভাব'ও আমার অনেক বিনীত বক্তৃতা কেটে গেছে। এই কারণেই বোধহয় সতের বৎসর বয়সের সময় আমি গল্প লিখতে শুরু করি। কিন্তু কিছুদিন বাড়ি গল্প রচনা অ-কেজোর কাজ মনে ক'রে আমি অভ্যাস ছেড়ে দিলাম। তারপর অনেক বৎসর কেটে গেল। আমি যে কোনকালে একটি লাইনও লিখেছি সে কথা ভুলে গেলাম।

আঠার বৎসর পরে একদিন লিখ'ও আরম্ভ করলাম। কারণটা দৈবদুর্ঘটনারই মত। আমার গুটিকয়েক পুণ্যতন বন্ধু একটি ছোট মাসিক পত্রের কবতে উদ্যোগী হলেন। কিছু প্রতিষ্ঠাবান লেখকদের কেউই এই সামান্য পত্রিকায় লেখা দিতে রাজী হলেন না। নিরুপায় হ'য়ে তাঁদের কেউ কেউ আমাকে স্মরণ করলেন। বিশ্বব চেষ্ঠায় তাঁরা আমার কাছ থেকে লেখা পাঠাবার কথা আদায় ক'রে নিলেন। এটা ১৯১৩ সনের কথা। আমি নিমরাঙ্গী হয়েছিলাম। কোন রকমে তাঁদের হাত থেকে রেহাই পাওয়ার জন্যে আমি লেখা দিতেও স্বীকার হয়েছিলাম। উদ্দেশ্য, কোন রকমে একবার রেশনে পৌঁছতে পারলেই হয়। কিন্তু চিঠির পর চিঠি আর টেলিগ্রামের তাড়া আমাকে অবশেষে সত্যসত্যি আবার কলম ধবতে প্ররোচিত করল। আমি তাঁদের নবপ্রকাশিত 'যমুনা'র জন্য একটি ছোট গল্প পাঠালাম। এই গল্পটি প্রকাশ হ'তে না হ'তেই বাংলার পাঠকসমাজে সমাদর লাভ করল। আমিও এক দিনেই নাম ক'বে দসলাম। তারপর আমি অদ্যাবধি নিয়মিতভাবে লিখে আসছি। বাংলাদেশে বোধ হয় আমিই একমাত্র সৌভাগ্যবান লেখক যাকে কোন দিন বাধার দুর্ভোগ ভোগ করতে হয়নি।

.. স্বপ্ন কি শুধু আমার পূর্ববর্তী পূজনীয় সাহিত্যচর্চায়গণের কাছেই? সংসারে যারা শুধু দিলে, পেলেন না কিছুই, যারা বঞ্চিত, যারা দুর্বল, উৎপীড়িত, মানুষ হ'য়েও মানুষে যাদের চোখের জলের কখনও হিসাব নিলে না, নিরুপায় দুঃখময় জীবনে যারা কোনদিন ভেবেই পেলেনা সমস্ত থেকেও কেন তাদের কিছুতেই অধিকার নেই—এদের কাছেও কি স্বপ্ন আমার কম? এদের বেদনাই দিলে আমার মুখ খুলে, এরাই পাঠালে আমাকে মানুষের কাছে মানুষের নালিশ জানাতে। তাদের প্রতি কত দেখেছি অবিচার, কত দেখেছি কুবিচার, কত দেখেছি নিবিচারে দুঃসহ সুবিচার। তাই আমার কাবনার শুধু এদেরই নিয়ে। সংসারে সৌন্দর্য সম্পদে ভরা বসন্ত আসে জানি, আনে সঙ্গে তার কোকিলের গান, আনে প্রফুল্লিত মল্লিকা-মালতী-জাতি-যুথি, আনে গন্ধগাকুল দক্ষিণা পবন। কিন্তু যে আবেষ্টনে দৃষ্টি আমার আবদ্ধ রয়ে গেল তার ভিতরে ওরা দেখা দিলেনা। ওদের সঙ্গে ঘনিষ্ঠ পরিচয়ের সুযোগ আমার ঘটলো না। সে দারিদ্র্য আমার লেখার মধ্যে চাইলেই চোখে পড়ে। কিন্তু অন্তরে যাকে পাইনি, স্রুতিমধুর শব্দবাণী অর্থহীন মালা গাঁথে তাকেই পেয়েছি ব'লে প্রকাশ করবার দৃষ্টতাও আমি করি নি। এমনি আরও অনেক কিছুই—এ জীবনে যাদের তত্ত্ব খুঁজে মেলিনি স্পষ্টিত অর্ধনয়ে মর্যাদা তাদের স্মরণ করার অপবাধও আমার নেই। তাই সাহিত্যসাধনায় বিষয়বস্তু ও বক্তব্য

আমার বিহ্বল ও ব্যাপক নয়, তারা সংকীর্ণ, স্বল্পপরিসরবদ্ধ। তবুও এটুকু দাবী করি, অসত্যে অনুরঞ্জিত ক'রে তাদের আজও আমি সত্যপ্রস্তুত করি নি।

• চিরজীবী হবার আশা আমি করিনে। কারণ, সংসারে অনেক কিছুই মতো মানবমনেরও পরিবর্তন আছে, সুতরাং আজ যা বড়, আব একদিন তাই যদি তুচ্ছ হ'য়ে যায় তাতে বিশ্বাসের কিছু নেই। সেদিন আমার সাহিত্যসাধনার বৃহত্তর অংশও যদি অনাগতর অবহেলায় ছুঁবে যায়, আমি ক্ষোভ কবব না। শুধু, মনে এই আশা রেখে যাব অনেক কিছু বাদ দিয়েও যদি সত্য কোথাও থাকে সেটুকু আমার থাকবে। সে আমার ক্ষয় পাবে না। ধনীর অজ্ঞান ঐশ্বর্য নাই বা হ'ল, বাক্যদেবীর অর্ধাসক্তারে ঐ স্বল্প সঞ্চারটুকু বেখে যাবার জন্যই আমার আজীবন সাধনা। দিনের শেষে এই আনন্দ মনে নিষে খুশী হ'য়ে বিদায় নেবো—ভেবে যাবো আমি ধন্য, জীবন আমার বৃথায যায় নি।

# My Life

Saratchandra Chattopadhyay

I have vivid recollections of my boyhood. It was my wont in the rural quiet to spend my days in netting fish, paddling canoes and propelling *dongas*<sup>1</sup>. Occasionally, for variety's sake, I would act as understudy in *jatra parties*<sup>2</sup>. Satiated with the cosy delight of such amateurism, I would turn tramp and set off on random treks with a napkin slung over my shoulder. Not exactly the voyage without destination as in Tagore's poem<sup>3</sup>, but of a rather different nature. That spell over, I would trace my way back home, exhausted and with bruised feet. The ceremony of a none-too-generous reception over, my guardians would lose no time in bundling me off to school once again. After getting another round of reception there, I would apply my mind to the prescribed books, such as, *Bōdhōdaya* and *Padyapāṭh*. Again one day I would forget my resolve, I would again be possessed by my evil genius, again act as understudy, set off as a tramp, return home, and again face the hailstorm of a similar ovation—thus ended a phase of my early life along with drills in *Bōdhōdaya* and *Padyapāṭh*.

I came to town where my elders put me in an Upper Primary School on the strength of my acquaintance with *Bōdhōdaya* alone. The new syllabus included *Sītār Banabās*, *Chārupāṭh*, *Sadbhāb-Śatak* and a voluminous grammar book. What was required of me was not just a thorough reading of the books or reviewing them in journals. I had to stand up and face the Pundit everyday for oral tests. So it can be unhesitatingly declared that my first introduction to Literature was through a veil of tears. At last came a day when I got out of that stage of my career after gaining a lot of bitter experience. Up till then I had not the faintest idea that literature could have any other purpose than adding to human miseries.

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<sup>1</sup> A *donga* is a small shallow-water country craft propelled by a bamboo pole pushed against the river bed.

<sup>2</sup> Open-air theatrical companies.

<sup>3</sup> There is a poem by Tagore entitled *Niruddēś Yātrā* (*A Voyage Without Destination*).

I was brought up in a family where poetry or fiction was considered a euphemism for immorality and music was dubbed untouchable. All its members were eager for a pass so as to qualify as lawyers. Thus passed my days in their company. But one day even this was disturbed by an unexpected turn of event. One of my relatives was a college student in the metropolis. He came home. He had a love for music and a passion for poetry. One day he called together the female inmates of the house and read out to them Tagore's *Prakṛtir Pratiśōdh*. I cannot say how much of it was grasped by the listeners. But as the reader himself wept, tears also welled up in my eyes. I hurried out of the room lest my weakness should be revealed. But I had my acquaintance with poetry for the second time and I can well recall that that was the first time I got the real taste of literature. Thereafter, I found it against my grain to abide by the conservative principles of the family along with its rigid tradition of reading law. I had to return to my village home.

But this time it was no longer that *Bōdhōdaya* ; I searched out from the rickety drawers of my father *Haridāsēr Guptakathā* and also *Bhabānī Pāṭhak*. I cannot blame my elders, for these were, by no means, school books ; on the other hand, they were unreadable stuff devoured by delinquents. So in order to have a good browse I had to retire to the cowshed. There I used to read and they listened. Now I no longer read, I am preoccupied with writing. I do not know who the possible readers of this stuff may be.

One day my teacher dropped a compassionate hint that it was impossible to acquire learning by continuing at the same school for long. So I had to journey back to town. It will not be out of place to mention here that no further change of schools was needed. Now came the time for me to know about the works of Bankimchandra. I could not even imagine then that there could be anything greater beyond this in fiction. I read all his novels over and over again until I almost memorised them. Perhaps this was a drawback with me. Not that I have never followed the path of blind imitation. All such attempts have proved fruitless as literary compositions ; but as literary exercises they provided a profitable occupation for me as I can feel even today.

Then began the new phase of 'Baṅgadarsan'. Tagore's *Chōkhēr Bāli* was appearing in instalments. A fresh radiance of style and diction seemed to greet our vision. The profound and intense joy then experienced by me is unforgettable. Never before had I thought even in my dreams that things could be put in such a way and that the reader could perceive his own mind so clearly through the portraits of somebody else's imagination. At long last I came to be introduced not only to literature but to my own self as well. It is not a truth that one gets much only by reading much. Those were but a few pages, yet where am I to find the language to pay my homage of gratitude to one who reached us such a precious treasure within so brief a compass ?

My connection with literature was severed soon after. I clean forgot having ever composed a single line in my life. I had a long stay abroad. I was quite in the dark about how modern Bengali literature had made great strides meanwhile with the poet<sup>1</sup> as the key figure. I was never fortunate enough to come in close touch with the poet; nor was I privileged to come under his literary tutelage. I remained totally isolated. It was all on surface, however. The underlying reality was just the reverse. In that foreign land I had with me some of the poet's books—in prose and verse. And in my heart I had profound regard and faith. In those days I read and re-read those very books. I never pondered over such high subjects as what were their rhythm and diction, and what was Art, how it was to be defined, and whether there had been any flaws anywhere according to the standard. All this I considered redundant. What I cherished was just the deep-rooted conviction that a more comprehensive creation was unthinkable. Whether in prose or in verse, this was my only stock-in-trade.

When, unexpectedly, I was one day called upon to serve the cause of literature, I had already met the demands of youth and reached middle age. Fatigue had set in and enthusiasm had dwindled—I was well past the learning stage. I lived abroad, unknown and cut off from all. Nevertheless, I responded to the call; fear did not creep in at all in my mind.

...My childhood and youth were passed in great poverty. I received almost no education for want of means. From my father I inherited nothing except, as I believe, his restless spirit and his keen interest in literature. The first made me a tramp and sent me out tramping the whole of India quite early, and the second made me a dreamer all my life. Father was a great scholar, and he had tried his hand at stories and novels, dramas and poems, in short, every branch of literature, but never could finish anything. I have not his work now—somehow it got lost; but I remember poring over those incomplete manuscripts, over again in my childhood, and many a night I kept awake regretting their incompleteness and thinking what might have been their conclusion if finished. Probably this led to my writing short stories when I was barely seventeen. But I soon gave up the habit as useless, and almost forgot in the long years that followed that I could even write a sentence in my boyhood. A mere accident made me start again, after the lapse of about eighteen years. Some of my old acquaintances started a little magazine, but no one of note would condescend to contribute to it, as it was so small and insignificant. When almost hopeless, some of them suddenly remembered me, and after much persuasion they succeeded in extracting from me a promise to write for it. This was in the year 1913. I promised most unwillingly—perhaps only to put them off till I had returned to Rangoon and could forget all about it. But sheer volume and force of their letters and telegrams compelled me at last to think seriously about

<sup>1</sup> Rabindranath Tagore

writing again. I sent them a short story for their magazine Yamuna. This became at once extremely popular, and made me famous in one day. Since then I have been writing regularly. In Bengal, perhaps I am the only fortunate writer who has not had to struggle.

...Am I indebted to my venerable literary predecessors alone? Do I owe any the less to those who have only made sacrifices for society but have got nothing in return, who are underprivileged, weak and oppressed, who are human beings and yet whose fellowmen have never taken account of their tears, who are doomed to spend helpless miserable lives for ever wondering why, having all, they are denied their rights in every sphere? It is the agonies of such people that have made me articulate. They it is that have briefed me to lodge a complaint on behalf of suffering humanity at the bar of human conscience. On numerous occasions have I found them victims of injustice, miscarriage of justice, and justice of a sort made intolerable by high-handedness. So my works are on these people alone. I know spring visits this world with its beauties and bounties accompanied by the cuckoo's warble and full-blown seasonal flowers along with the restless south wind redolent with their fragrance. But all these did not come within the compass in which my vision remained bound. I could not just become intimate with them. This deficiency is obvious in my writings. At the same time I had not the audacity to weave garlands of senseless but sonorous words just to show that I have attained something which, in reality, had never any access to my heart. Nor am I guilty of belittling with an air of insolent immodesty many other similar things whose significance has ever eluded my grasp. As a result, the subject-matter and theme of my literary creation are not wide and extensive, but narrow and limited. Nevertheless, it remains my claim that I have not divested them of truth by giving them colourful touches of unreality.

...I do not aspire after immortality, for like many other things in life the human mind is subject to change. So what looks important today may appear insignificant some other day, and small wonder. Even if, in the long run, the major portion of my literary attainment is submerged under the neglect of unborn generations, I shall have no regrets. It remains my only hope that if there is an element of truth anywhere in it that much will survive as my contribution defying the ravages of time. It matters little if it is not abundantly rich; it is in order to pay my homage to the Muse with that humble offering that I have sacrificed my life-long labour. This heartening reflection will illumine my hour of departure at the end of the day and fill me with the assurance that I am a blessed being who has not lived in vain.

*The portion in paragraph nine is in Saratchandra's own words.  
The remainder has been translated by Ashim Mukhopadhyay.*

## A Chronicle of Sixtytwo Years : 1876-1938

- 1876            15 September (31 Bhadra, 1283 B. S.). Born at Debanandapur, Bengal (now West Bengal), son of Matilal Chattopadhyay and Bhubannamohini Debi (née Gangopadhyay).
- 1876-83        Early life in Debanandapur. Elementary schooling in the village 'Pathshali' (primary school).
- 1884\*          Visit to Dibrui in Bihar with father.
- 1886            Moves to Bhagalpur (Bihar) in the company of his parents to live with the family of his maternal grandfather and is admitted to the Durgacharan Boys' School. Passes the Primary Examination.
- 1887            Admitted to the seventh class (presentday class four) in the Bhagalpur Zilla School and shows a great promise as a pupil getting 'double promotion' at the annual examination. Evinces versatile tastes and habits far from regular.
- 1889            Father leaves service.  
July. Returns to Debanandapur with parents and is admitted to the fourth class (presentday class seven) in the Hooghly Branch School. Evinces interest in social service, on occasion slips away unnoticed and goes on journeys without destination.
- 1892            Studies discontinued for a year owing to financial stringency. Beginnings of literary endeavour. Writes *Kāśināth*, *Kākhāsā* and *Brahmadaitya* (manuscript of the latter two lost).
- 1893            Moves again to Bhagalpur with parents and resumes his studies in the first class (presentday class ten) in the 'Tej Narayan



Jubilee Collegiate School (now renamed Tej Narayan Banali Collegiate School).

- 1894 Passes the Entrance Examination and takes up the First Arts (F.A.) course in the Tej Narayan Jubilee College (now renamed Tej Narayan Banali College). Often accompanies and assists his friend Raju (Rajendranath Majumdar) in daring adventures and humanitarian activities. Shows marks of talent for vocal and instrumental music. Takes part in musical soirees and amateur theatricals. Starts a manuscript magazine named 'Shishu' with the young members of family.
- 1895 November. Mother dies.
- 1896 Gives up studies at the college owing to financial stringency and cannot sit for the F. A. Examination being unable to procure fees for it.
- 1896-1900 Devotes himself to literary pursuit, music and acting : a new phase in his life of struggle begins. Develops a deep passion for study. Earns popularity for excellence in singing, flute and tabla-playing, and as an amateur actor in the Adampur Club, especially for performance as heroines in the plays *Mṛṇālīnī*, *Bilwamaṅgal* and *Janū*. Accepts a job, to help his father in his distress, in the Raj Banali Estate of Godda (Bihar) but, unable to endure the shackles of service, quits the job after a short period. Along with friends and acquaintances, including Bibhuti-bhusan Bhatta and his widowed sister Nirupama Debi, forms a literary circle. Writes *Kōrēl*, *Pāṣāṇ*, *Kāśīnāth* (improving upon its earlier draft), *Abhimān* (written in imitation of Henry Wood's *East Lynne*), *Bōjhā*, *Bichār*, *Haricharaṇ*, *Dēhdās*, *Baṛadīdī*, *Chandra-nāth*, *Ālō Ō Chhāyā*, *Anupamār Prēm*, *Śubhadā*, *Sukumārēr Bālyakathā*, *Kṣudrēr Gaurab* (an essay), a few poems (including one in English), and parts of the early portion of *Charitrahīn*. Also translates Marie Corelli's *The Mighty Atom*.
- 1901 A monthly manuscript magazine 'Chhaya' brought out by his literary circle, contributes many of his early writings like *Kāśīnāth*, *Bōjhā*, *Anupamār Prēm*, *Kṣudrēr Gaurab*, etc., to this magazine. Leaves home in Bhagalpur, largely in obedience to that restless spirit inherited from his father, and goes out tramping many parts of the country and acquires firsthand experience of life, especially in the lower strata of society.
- 1902 Comes down to Bhagalpur on hearing the news of his father's death. Starts for Calcutta to secure a job.

- 1903 January. Enters the 'Kuntalin Prize' competition with his story *Mandir* under the name of his uncle, Surendranath Gangopadhyay, and ultimately wins the prize.  
January. Starts for Rangoon, a penniless youth, in search of a job. A wider horizon of life opens up.
- 1903-06 Serves in different offices in Rangoon and Pegu in Burma.
- 1905 Sings at a reception given to poet Nabinchandra Sen during the latter's visit to Rangoon.
- 1907 *Baradidi*, an early work, published in the *Bharati*—his first work to appear in print under his own name which is, however, not given out, during serialisation, until at the end.  
December. Visits Calcutta to undergo a surgical operation and returns to Rangoon three months later.
- 1908-12 Applies himself to intensive study of various branches of science, philosophy and history. Builds up a personal library. Learns Homeopathy to help his poor neighbours with free medical treatment. Found a primary school for the children of his worker-neighbours. Marries Hiranmayi Debi.
- 1909\* Starts oilpainting : 'Ravana-Mandodari' is said to be his first major work in painting.
- 1912 5 February. His residence burnt in fire ; library, manuscript of *Charitrahin*, a collection of vast material on the lives of many women, and all his oilpaintings, including 'Mahasweta', destroyed.  
Again visits Calcutta.
- 1913 Starts writing again, after a long lapse, persuaded by old acquaintances in Calcutta to contribute to their newly started magazine, *Yamuna*.  
Feb-March. *Rāmēr Sumati* appears in the *Yamuna* and brings him fame and immense popularity. *Baradidi* published in bookform—his first book to appear in print. *Bālyā-Smṛti* and *Kāśināth* published in the *Sahitya*. *Birāj Bau* appears in one of the early issues of the *Bharatbarsa*.
- 1914 Visits Calcutta and stays for about six months.  
*Bindur Chhēlē*, *Pariñitā* and *Paṇḍit Maśāi* published.
- 1915 Severs his tie with the *Yamuna* and starts contributing regularly to the *Bharatbarsa*.  
December. *Mējdidi*, a collection of stories, published.
- 1916 January. *Pallī-Samāj* published.  
March. *Chandranāth* published.  
April. Leaves Burma giving up his job and returns to Benārl. Settles at Baje Sibpur, Howrah, for some years.

- August. *Baikunthēr Will* published.  
November. *Arakṣaṇīyā* published.
- 1917 February. *Śrikānta, Part One* appears.  
June. *Dēhdās* appears.  
September. *Dattā* and *Śrikānta, Part Two* published.  
November. *Charitrahīn* appears.  
Endears himself to the reading public as their most beloved writer and invites wrath, at the same time, of social diehards for his attack on feudal prejudices and religious bigotry.
- 1917\* Meets Rabindranath Tagore in Calcutta.
- 1918 February. *Swāmi* appears in the *Natavan*, edited by Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das.  
3 August. First performance of *Birāj Bau*, dramatised by Bhupendranath Bandyopadhyay and directed by Amritlal Basu, at the Star Theatre.
- 1919 October. Basumatī Sahitya Mandir starts publishing his first collected works.  
Publication of *Birāj Bau* in Hindi under the title *Birāj Bahu*—his first translation in an Indian language.
- 1920 March. *Gṛhadāha* appears.  
October. *Bāmunēr Mēyē* appears.
- 1921 Beginning of his active participation in the national freedom struggle against the British imperialist rule. Participates in the Non-Cooperation movement and joins the Indian National Congress. Becomes President of the Howrah District Congress Committee at the request of Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das. Beginning of a close association and warm relation with Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Reads an article *Śikṣār Birōdh* at the Calcutta National College as a rejoinder to Rabindranath Tagore's article *Śikṣār Mṛtan*.  
30 September. Contributes to the first issue of the *Banglā Katha* edited by Chittaranjan Das.  
Assists Deshabandhu in founding the 'Nari-Karmamandir' for women in Calcutta.  
October. Reads an article, *Swarāj Sādhanāya Nārī*, on the role of women in the independence movement, at a meeting of the Engineering College students in Sibpur.
- 1922 February. Deeply shocked at the suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. His famous remark on it: 'Non-violence is a very noble idea, but the achievement of freedom is nobler, hundred times nobler'.  
June. Reads an address of welcome to Deshabandhu

Chittaranjan Das at a reception at the Sraddhananda Park, Calcutta, on the occasion of Deshabandhu's release from jail. June. Presides over a meeting at the Theosophical Society Hall to mourn the death of poet Satyendranath Datta.

14 July. Resigns office of the President of the Howrah District Congress Committee. Assumes the office again on request from Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das.

September. *Ādhārē Ālō* screened in the Rasa Theatre (now renamed 'Purna')—the first silent film to be made on his works; directed by Sisir Kumar Bhaduri and produced by the Tajmahal Film Company.

An English translation by Kshitish Chandra Sen and Theodosia Thompson of *Śrikānta, Part One* published by the Oxford University Press.

1923 Devotes himself to the work of the Swarajya Party founded by Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das.

May. Reception by the Barishal branch of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishat.

June. Presides over a literary gathering at the Sibpur Institute in Howrah.

Awarded the Jagattarini Medal by the University of Calcutta.

August. *Dēnā Pāōnū* published.

1924 September. Presides over the annual conference of the Nadia branch of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishat held in Krishnanagar.

October. Edits, along with Nirmal Chandra Chunder, an illustrated weekly, *Rup O Ranga*.

*Naba-Bidhān* published.

1925 25 January. Presides over the ninth annual literary conference held under the auspices of the Viswanath Library, Varanasi.

10-11 April. Presides over the literary section of the Bangiya Sahitya Sammelan held at Munshiganj, Dacca.

16 June. Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das dies; deeply grieved at the death of the beloved and respected leader of the freedom-struggle.

Presides over a meeting at Bali, Howrah, to mourn the death of Deshabandhu.

1926 February. Leaves Baje Sibpur and moves to his newly constructed house at Samtaber on the bank of the river Rupnarayan in Howrah District. Continues here his close link with the revolutionary freedom-fighters.

June-July. Presides over the third annual conference of the Surma Valley Students' Association in Assam. Reception by the students of Silchar, Assam.

31 August. *Pathēr Dābī* published and greeted by the reading public with tremendous enthusiasm.  
 Presides over a meeting of the revolutionary organisation 'Karmi Sangha' at Uttarpara; poet Nazrul Islam sings patriotic songs at the meeting.

- 1927      13 February. Reception by the Sibpur Sahitya Samsad.  
             1 April. *Pathēr Dābī* proscribed by the British Government.  
             18 April. *Śrīkānta, Part Three* published.  
             6 August. First performance of *Ṣōraṣī* under direction of Sisir Kumar Bhaduri at the Natya Mandir.  
             September. Contributes an article, *Sāhityēr Rīti Ō Nīti*, to the Bangabani in its Aswin issue as a rejoinder to Rabindranath Tagore's essay *Sāhityadharmā* published earlier in the Srahan issue of the Bichitra.
- 1927\*      Organises a civic reception by the Howrah District Congress Committee to the revolutionaries freed from jails 'to receive them and congratulate them openly and whole-heartedly' and to create a 'moral impression' on the public. It is the first open public reception given to the revolutionary fighters for national independence.
- 1928      April. Presides over the annual conference of the 'Haripada Sahitya Mandir', a library in Purulia.  
             September. Civic reception on the occasion of his fifty-third birthday at the University Institute Hall, Calcutta.  
             September. Reception by the Bankim-Sarat Samiti of the Presidency College, Calcutta.
- 1929      15 February. Presides over the Bikrampur Youth and Student Conference at 'Abhay Asram', Malikanda, Dacca.  
             30 March. Presides over the Bengal Provincial Youth Conference at Rangpur (now in Bangladesh). In his presidential address he criticises Gandhiji's policy of making Khilafat movement part of the *Swaraj* movement; also expresses his strong disagreement with the *Charka* and *Khadi* movement.  
             18 April. *Taruṇēr Bidrōha* published.  
             Serialisation of *Bipradās* in the Benu starts.  
             September. Inaugurates the Howrah District Youth Conference in Howrah.
- 1930      June. Attends the All India Congress Committee session in Lahore (now in Pakistan). Reception by the Bengali residents of the city.  
             21 October. Visits the Prabartak Sangha at Chandannagar (Bengal) and participates in a discussion there.
- 1930\*      Settles a strike by the Howrah Municipality conservancy workers in their favour.

- 1931 April. Presides over the Youth Conference in Comilla (now in Bangladesh).  
 May. *Śēṣ Praśna* published.  
 7 August. Bankim-Sarat Samiti, Presidency College, holds the first session of a study-circle on his works. Second and third sessions held on 15 September and 10 October respectively.  
 17 September. Address presented by the Bankim-Sarat Samiti at a reception on the occasion of his fiftysixth birthday : C. V. Raman, among others, speaks and Sisir Kumar Bhaduri recites at the ceremony.  
 24 December. Release of the film *Dēnā Pāōnā*—the first sound film of his work—by the New Theatres at Chitra : directed by Premankur Atarathi.  
 December. Presides over a literary meeting held to celebrate the seventieth birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore at the Town Hall, Calcutta.
- 1931\* The first socialist forum in Bengal formed at his initiative and inspiration.
- 1932 January. Addresses a gathering to celebrate birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda at the Belur Math and expresses his lack of faith in religion and 'asram'-life, Subhas Chandra Bose presides.  
 August. *Swadēs Ō Sāhitya* published.  
 18 September. Felicitated by writers and citizens on the occasion of his fiftyseventh birthday at the Town Hall, Calcutta.  
 Felicitated by students of the Bengali department of the University of Calcutta.
- 1933 March. *Śrīkānta, Part Four* published.
- 1934 27 January. Presides over a literary conference at Faridpur (now in Bangladesh).  
 July. Bangiya Sahitya Parishat elects him an honorary fellow.  
 December. Addresses the literary section of the 'Prabasi Banga Sahitya Sammelan' held at the Town Hall, Calcutta. Presides over a meeting held to mourn the death of poet Atulprasad Sen.
- 1935 26 January. Presides over a meeting to observe the *Swaraj* (independence) day at the Town Hall, Howrah.  
 February. *Bipradūs* appears in bookform.  
 30 March. *Dēbdās*, film (sound) version of the novel under the same title, released in Calcutta ; directed by Pramathesh Barua and produced by the New Theatres.

Moves to his newly constructed house at 24 Aswini Datta Road in Calcutta.

June. General President of the twelfth conference of the Santipur Sahitya Sammelan.

P.E.N. Club, Calcutta, accords him a reception.

September. Presides over a meeting of the Konnagar Patha-Chakra, Konnagar, Hooghly District.

1936

Presides over a Bengali literary conference held at the Asutosh College, Calcutta.

15 July. Delivers opening address at a meeting held at the Town Hall, Calcutta, with Rabindranath Tagore in the chair, to protest against the Communal Award of the British Government.

Presides over a meeting at the Albert Hall, Calcutta, held to protest against the Communal Award.

29 July. The University of Dacca confers on him the D. Litt. degree.

31 July. Presides over the tenth annual conference of the Muslim Sahitya Sammelan in Dacca.

Reception by the Dacca University Students' Union ; elected a life-member of it. Reception by the three Student Halls of the University, Milan Parishad and Kamrunnesa Girls' College.

3 September. Signatory, along with Rabindranath Tagore, Premchand, Jawaharlal Nehru, Prafulla Chandra Roy, etc., to a statement issued at the World Peace Congress (Brussels) convened by Romain Rolland to fight the menace of fascism.

October. Felicitated by 'Rabi-basar' at a special ceremony held at Prafulla-Kanan, Beliaghata, Calcutta, on the occasion of his sixtyfirst birthday.

December 17. Resigns from the presidentship of the Howrah District Congress Committee.

1937

Reception by the staff and students of the Scottish Church College, Calcutta.

Reception by the staff and students of the Vidyasagar College, Calcutta.

Attends a reception by the All India Radio on the occasion of his sixtysecond birthday.

December. Health deteriorates seriously and he is admitted to a nursing home.

1938

12 January. A surgical operation is performed on him.

16 January (2 Magh, 1344 B. S.). Passes away at the Park Nursing Home, Calcutta, at the age of sixtyone years four months.

\* Disputed or uncertain

# **An Album**





The pictorial memoir presented here has many obvious blanks in the sequence of records it embodies, for few documents exist on the writer's life and works. It was against his grain to be mindful of preserving materials concerning himself. Perhaps this becomes a man whose life is a testimony to aesthetic indifference towards self.

The opening picture in the album has an autograph on it. The house where the writer was born, second in the series of pictures, is shown here in its present face-lift. No pictures of the writer in his early years in Debanandapur are available. Only one is known (a group-photo) of his student-days in Bhagalpur.

Some of the letters, photographs and manuscripts included in this album make their appearance for the first time. The facsimiles of letters to Kalicharan Mukhopadhyay and Umacharan Chattopadhyay were not printed earlier. The draft of the letter to Dilip Kumar Roy remained unpublished so long. The picture showing the writer on the bank of the river Rupnarayan is also printed for the first time. The foreword to *Chala Pathē* (originally reproduced in facsimile of Saratchandra's own handwriting) has been recovered from captivity in oblivion for many years since the book was proscribed. Facsimiles of a few leaves from the manuscripts of *Śrīkānta, Part Four* and *Śēṣēr Parichay* also appear for the first time.

More materials of documentary value on the writer are likely to be lying in possession of some lovers of Saratchandra. This album, if it succeeds in encouraging their publication, will then contribute to the production of a more complete pictorial memoir of Saratchandra.

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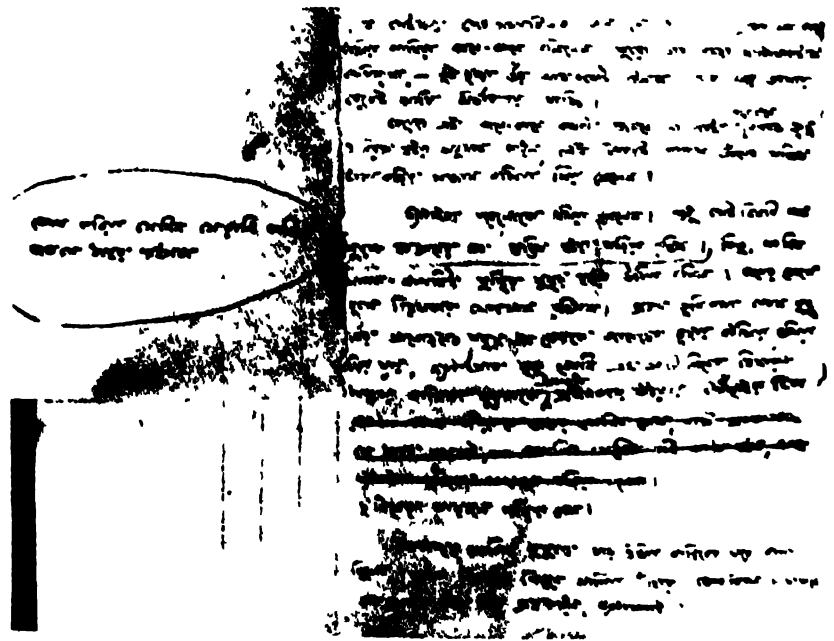


In his late thirties. The creative genius was at work after a long silence. At this time (1914) he was engaged in writing a noveltte *Parinidā*



In 1915 the author of *Pallī-Samāy*

A leaf from the manuscript of  
*Pallī Samāṃ*



The house in Baje Sibpur in Howrah where he lived for nine years after his return to Bengal from Burma. These were the most productive years of his creative span



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A page from the manuscript of  
*Srīkanta, Part Two.*

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ਅਕਾਲੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ, ਭੁਭਨਾ : ਭੁਭਨਾ ਸਾਹਿਬ ।

ਜਾਂਤਾ ਕਿ ਕੁਝ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ ?

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First page of the press copy of *Bāmunēr Mēyē* in author's own handwriting. He became the target of attack from social diehards for this novel which deals with the vices of the Brahmin-dominated old Society.

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A letter (4.11.20) to Umacharan Chattopadhyay of Bansberia (Hooghly) whose article on the novelist was not acceptable for publication to the then editor of the *Bharatbansa*, Jaladhar Sen. The letter has reference to the contemporary literary criticisms of the writer, including one by Dinesh Chandra Sen, *The Genius of Saratchandra*, printed elsewhere in this volume.

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১০ (১০) | ১০

A letter (1921) addressed to Pannalal Bose requesting him to try his hand in translating into English the first chapter of *Śrīkānta*, Part I. Messrs Oxford University Press had approached the author for his permission for publication of the first English translation of *Part One* of the novel. The author expressed himself in favour of publishing the first two parts in English in a single volume.

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ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ 'ਤੇ ਅੰਤਰਿਕ ਪ੍ਰਾਰਥਨਾ -

Sibpu  
Honal





At Munshigunj, Dacca (now in Bangladesh), where he presided over the Literary Section of Bangiya Sahitya Sammelan (Bengal Literary Conference) in 1925. His presidential address dwelt on *Sāhitye Art Ō Dūrniti* (Art and Immorality in Literature).

He moved to this house at Santaber (Howrah) on the bank of the river Rupnarayan in February 1926. It is a twostoreyed house with mud walls and tiled roof. It was frequently visited by the revolutionaries and many eminent persons from Calcutta. Here he wrote *Satya Prayoga*, *Śrīkṛānta-Part Four*, *Bipradāsa*, *Śāśter Parichay* (incomplete), and *Āgāmī Kāl* (incomplete).



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~~Handwritten text in Devanagari script, mostly illegible due to heavy scribbles and corrections.~~

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| Govt of 1926 Bengal |  | Department      | Poll     |
| Enclosures          | From<br>SIR Charles Tegart, Kt., C.I.E., M.V.O.,<br>Commissioner of Police,<br>Calcutta. | Branch          | Poll     |
| Place               | SUBJECT:   | File No.        | 605/26   |
| Spare copies        | <i>Put up with 50</i><br><i>24/11</i>  | Number in File  |          |
|                     |  | Date of receipt | 24/11/16 |
|                     |  | Diary Number    | 6/168    |

CONFIDENTIAL.

No. 605/26

Chief  
TO THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF BENGAL,  
Political DEPARTMENT.

Calcutta 23rd November 1916

Sir,

~~Dear Sir,~~

I have the honour to forward herewith, for the consideration and orders of Government, the translation of objectionable passages from the book entitled "PATHER DABI" written by Sarat Chandra Chatterjee - a wellknown novelist of Bengal, printed by Satyakinkar Banerji from the Cotton Press, 57, Harrison Road and published by Uma Prasad Mukherji at 77, Ashutosh Mukherji Road, Bhowanipore, Calcutta. A printed copy of the book was sent to the Public Prosecutor, Calcutta, for his opinion and he advises that the book is liable to be proscribed under Section 99A of the Criminal Procedure Code and the author and the printer to be prosecuted under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code. The translation may kindly be returned after perusal,

I have the honour to be  
Sir,  
Your most obedient servant,

For Commissioner of Police

AC 19-1-16-27 7.10.16-1916-20,000

Letter (23.11.26) from Charles Tegart, the then Commissioner of Police, Calcutta, to W.D.R. Prentice, the then Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, forwarding an advice for proscription of *Pather Dabi* and prosecution of its author and printer (Satyakinkar Bandopadhyay of the Cotton Press, Calcutta). B. L. Mitter, the then Advocate General, dealt with the case in considerable detail and gave his opinion in favour of proscribing the novel. The Chief Secretary agreed with him.

On the day following the publication of *Pather Dabi* (August 31, 1926). The previous night was passed in a sleepless condition. A tremendous public response greeted the author and the alien imperialist rulers were alerted.

Gazette notification (4.1.27) on proscription of *Pather Dabi* on the ground that the novel excited, or attempted to excite, disaffection towards the Government. The ban was lifted twelve years later, after the death of the author, through rescission of the above order on 1.3.39.



#### NOTIFICATION.

No. 1031.—The 11th January 1927.—In exercise of the power conferred by section 99A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, as amended by the third schedule of the Press Law Repeal and Amendment Act, 1922 (Act XIV of 1922), the Governor in Council hereby declares to be forfeited to His Majesty all copies, wherever found, of the Bengali book entitled "*Pather Dabi*" written by Sri Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, printed by Sri Satya Kinkar Bandyopadhyay at the Cotton Press, 57, Harrison Road, Calcutta, and published by Sri Umapada Mukhopadhyay, 77, Ashutosh Mukharji Road, Calcutta, on the ground that the said book contains words which bring or attempt to bring into hatred or contempt and excite or attempt to excite disaffection towards the Government established by law in British India, the publication of which is punishable under section 124A of the Indian Penal Code.

W. D. R. PRENTICE,  
Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal (offg.).













## BENGALI VERBACULAR

**Mr. SARATCHANDRA CHATTERJEE.**  
**Prof. DINESCHANDRA SEN, BAI BARADAR**  
**Paper-Setters—B. A., D. Litt.**

**Head Examiner—NAGABHOPADHYAY PRANATHANATH TANK,**  
**BURDIA.**

**Examiners—**  
**Mr. PRABHATKUMAR MOOKERJEE, B. A.**  
**RAI SAKSHI JAGADANANDA RAY.**  
**Mr. SATISCHANDRA MITRA, B. A., B. T.**  
**KALIPADA MOOKERJEE.**  
**" GOURDANATH GUHA, M. A.**  
**" PURNACHANDRA DE, B. A.**  
**" BABANATHANJAN RAY.**  
**" MANMATHANATH GHOSH.**  
**" GURUBANDHU BHATTACHARYA, B. A., B.**  
**" NIRMALNATH RAY, B. L.**  
**" SITANATH PRADHAN, M. Sc., Ph. D.**

*Candidates are requested to give their answers in their own words as far as practicable.*

*The figures in the margin indicate full marks.*

1. Either, What was the stage in which Vyāsanagar found Bengali prose? Discuss how Vyāsanagar contributed to the development of the Bengali language and literature, giving a complete list of his works.  
 Or, Justify, on the line of Bahadurānath, the following remarks of Goethe on Rabindrala —  
 "Wouldst thou the young year's blossoms and the fruit of decline And all by which the soul is ennobled, fostered and fed, Wouldst thou earth and heaven itself in one sole name combine, I name thee, O Rabindrala, and all at once is said."

2. With regard to Krishna Kanta's Will—  
 বাস্তবিক বিক বিদ্যা, সৌচিকীয় জীবন যুগ বহিরা দেশ কোন্‌ বারো

যাচরিত্তিক বিক বিদ্যা, জীবনের জীবন যুগ বহিরা দেশ কোন্‌ বারো

কবি ও কবিদের ব্যক্তিগত ?

3. Give, in your own words, the Puranic story of Brāhmaṇa on Hemachandra's Brāhmaṇa or its basis.

4. Explain, with reference to context, any three of the following extracts, but not more than five from each group—

## GROUP A

(a) সাহিত্যিক ব্যক্তিগত বিদ্যা, জীবনের জীবন যুগ বহিরা দেশ কোন্‌ বারো  
 এই বাক্যটির অর্থ ব্যক্তিগত জীবন যুগ বহিরা দেশ কোন্‌ বারো

সাহিত্যিক ব্যক্তিগত বিদ্যা, জীবনের জীবন যুগ বহিরা দেশ কোন্‌ বারো  
 এই বাক্যটির অর্থ ব্যক্তিগত জীবন যুগ বহিরা দেশ কোন্‌ বারো

(b) বঙ্গ-ভাষা কবিদের বিদ্যা, জীবনের জীবন যুগ বহিরা দেশ কোন্‌ বারো  
 এই বাক্যটির অর্থ ব্যক্তিগত জীবন যুগ বহিরা দেশ কোন্‌ বারো

(c) বঙ্গ ভাষা কবিদের বিদ্যা, জীবনের জীবন যুগ বহিরা দেশ কোন্‌ বারো  
 এই বাক্যটির অর্থ ব্যক্তিগত জীবন যুগ বহিরা দেশ কোন্‌ বারো

## GROUP B

(a) বিদ্যা, জীবনের জীবন যুগ বহিরা দেশ কোন্‌ বারো  
 এই বাক্যটির অর্থ ব্যক্তিগত জীবন যুগ বহিরা দেশ কোন্‌ বারো

(b)

(c)

বঙ্গ-ভাষা কবিদের বিদ্যা, জীবনের জীবন যুগ বহিরা দেশ কোন্‌ বারো  
 এই বাক্যটির অর্থ ব্যক্তিগত জীবন যুগ বহিরা দেশ কোন্‌ বারো

1929

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ଉପରୋକ୍ତ ଅର୍ଥ ଗଣିତାନ୍ତର ହେବା ପରେ ଏହି କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ସମ୍ପାଦନ କରିବାକୁ  
ଆଜ୍ଞା । ଉପରୋକ୍ତ ଆୟର ମୁଲ୍ୟାଙ୍କନ କରାଯାଇ ଏହା ବିଶେଷତା ଦିଆଯାଉଅଛି ।

- how the other goes when we take the first step - also  
 ? what are some other variables that determine it? take  
 it away as a whole by - which takes out your current money  
 amount from budget! the budget has been made  
 the other - what happens also! what price they are paying  
 the government budget! why have prices fallen after-

• 1. (a) The given function is linear.

ਅੰਕ: 1 25 ਨਾ ਮਾਰਚ 1995

ਅਮਰਨਾਥ ਭੀਮਾਨੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਾਹਿਬ

Letter to Kedarnath Bandyopadhyay written in 1929 from Santaber. Wherever he lived, the writer would be on the side of those who suffered injustice. This letter has reference to a court-case between some poor villagers and the local Zemindar. With the writer's help the villagers had ultimately won.



In 1929.



The author of *Śeṣ Prasāna*.



•

Ames by Weymouth

~~Confidential~~

Draft of a letter to Dilip Kumar Roy. There is mention of a remark by Annadasenkar Roy that Sarathandra was not acquainted with modern girls and that his characters like Bijaya of *Dantā* were simply fictitious. Against this the writer had only this to say that he knew the life-story of many women and he knew at the same time that the real-life incidents did not necessarily make literature, the knowledge of real-life acted only as the foundation of his literary works.

A page from the manuscript of *Bipraddās*.







In company of Bularani Debi  
Birendra Kumar Ghosh and  
Manudranath Roy



This photograph was taken in a  
steamer party on the Ganga after  
the conclusion of the Prabasi Banga  
Sahitya Sammelan. Seated from  
left to right: Ramnanda  
Chattopadhyay, Rabindranath  
Satchandra, Kedarnath  
Bandyopadhyay.









A portrait of the writer in the late years  
of life.



At the convocation of the  
Dacca University conferring on him the  
D. Litt. degree (honoris causa). Standing  
(left to right) are Judunath Sarkar,  
the writer, Chancellor Governor,  
Prafulla Chandra Ray,  
Vice-Chancellor A. F. Rahman.





The novelist and the poet. On the occasion of the novelist's sixtyfirst birthday (1936) Rabibasar held a garden party in Prafulla Kaman, Belaghat. Rabindranath attended the celebration and felicitated the novelist. Address of the poet is printed elsewhere in this volume.

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Two pages from the manuscript of  
*Seyr Parichay*. Some scribbles appear  
 at the bottom. The author had been  
 writing this novel in 1932 when he had  
 been living at Santabar. But failing  
 health, lethargy and death prevented its  
 completion. Fifteen chapters of it were  
 serialised in the *Bharathara*.

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କୃଷି ଉତ୍ପାଦନରେ ପ୍ରତି -

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૩૭. અમરનામ ફિલ્મ નવજીવ | અમરનામ અમરનામ ફિલ્મ, જોડા ફિલ્મ (સી.)  
 ફિલ્મ સ્ટુડિયો, ફિલ્મ 'અમર' અમરનામ અમર ફિલ્મ | ૨. અમરનામ અમરનામ  
 ફિલ્મના અમરનામ જોડા ફિલ્મના અમરનામ અમરનામ અમરનામ અમરનામ

[illegible]

First page of the manuscript of *Lulu*, a short story for children. There are three stories under same title and this is the second. An instruction occurs on the margin urging return of the manuscript.

— 1907 —

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Handwritten notes on lined paper, mostly illegible due to blurring and redaction marks.

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 ၆။ အကျဉ်းချုပ် အချက်အလက်  
 ၇။ အကျဉ်းချုပ် အချက်အလက်  
 ၈။ အကျဉ်းချုပ် အချက်အလက်  
 ၉။ အကျဉ်းချုပ် အချက်အလက်  
 ၁၀။ အကျဉ်းချုပ် အချက်အလက်

4. 37 5/11 0012 11727 10 1

A page from the manuscript of *Bhāṭamanda*. Suratchandra wrote the first chapter of this novel and nine other writers completed it.

contained my money in the Imperial  
shall be spent only on the support of  
the marriage of my brother's daughter  
if there shall be any surplus the  
shall be spent for the use & benefit  
my brother's children or of any of the

In witness where, I have set my  
to this as my last will & testament  
this the 11th day of January 1938

Signed by the abovesaid in  
our presence who at his  
request & in his presence  
in the presence of each  
other have signed the  
attesting witnesses

N.C. Chander  
Sohnita Calcutta.

Uma Para Morayje  
advent, Calcutta 1892

Last will and testament (11.1.38) of the writer bequeathing all his estate and effects to his wife Hiranmayi Debi. In December 1937 his health condition took a serious turn for the worse and he had to be admitted to a nursing home for an operation. The will was drawn up there. The attesting witnesses are Nirmal Chandra Chunder and Umprasad Mookerjee.

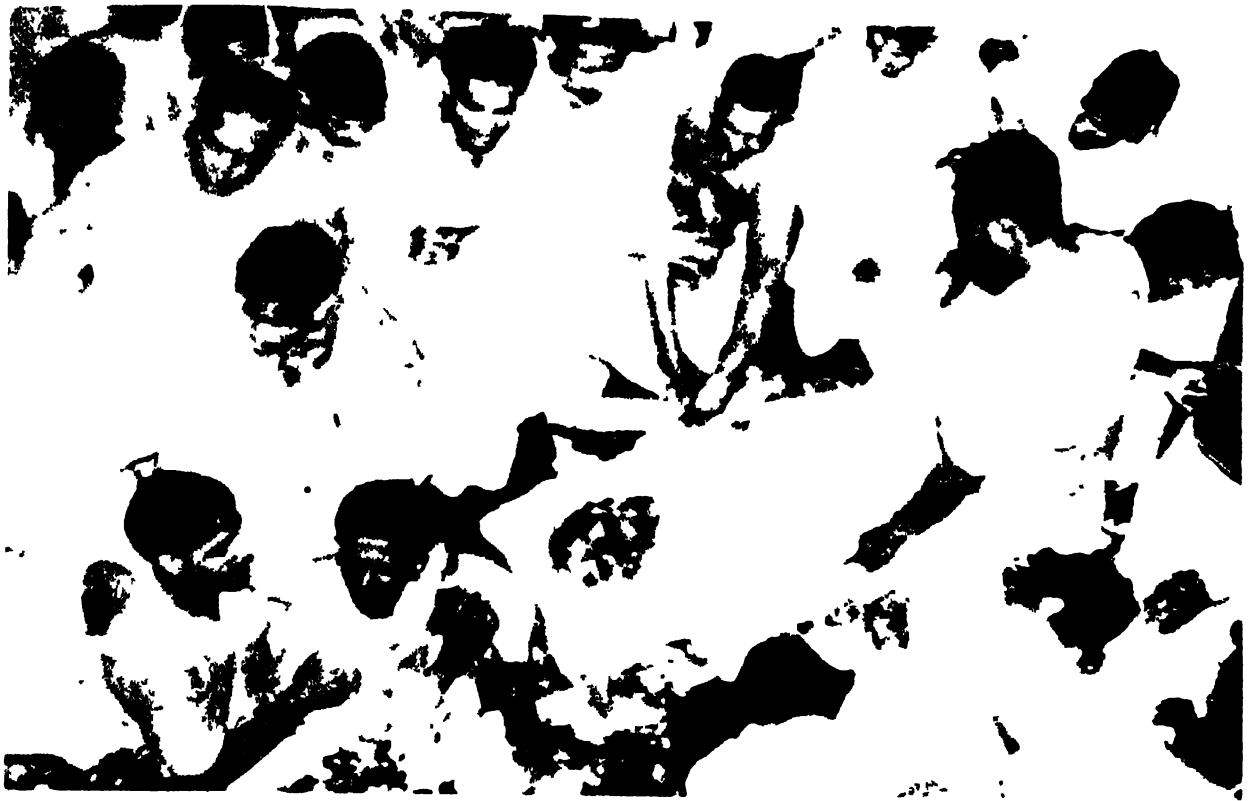
The last handwriting (12.1.38). It is a consent which the writer gave to Dr. Kumudshankar Ray to operate on him. The words of consent were written by the doctor and the author wrote beneath these few words : 'With all my senses and courage intact.'

I take on myself all costs of operation and request Dr. to S. Roy to operate on my ~~my~~ <sup>the</sup> group.

Park Nursing Home  
12.1.38.

Home  
38  
Sawitch  
12-11-38

With all my <sup>best</sup> wishes  
& Courage in fact



Laid on the bier The end came on January 16, 1838 For several days preceding people had been anxiously following his health bulletins As the news of his demise flashed, they thronged his residence where the bier was brought

The Last Journey Vast concourse of people from all walks of life following the bier carrying their most beloved writer





## Bibliography





Works on Saratchandra have been translated in almost all the major Indian languages (some have been turned into a number of foreign languages also). While the Bengali originals and their translations continue to be popular as ever, works on the author pour in every now and then. A bibliography of the original works, translations and select works on the writer is presented here.

Three major sections appear. The first includes Bengali originals arranged in a chronological sequence of publication under the following heads: *Novels, Short Stories, Drama, Drama Collection, Essays, Collected Works, Posthumous Publications*.

The second is a compilation of translations in different Indian and foreign languages. The arrangement under each language head, follows alphabetical order of the original works. Some additional heads, wherever necessary, are also appended: *Unidentified Works, Collected Works, Essays*, etc. The list of translations in Indian languages, along with English, precedes that in foreign languages. It will be evident that translators have often taken liberty to select stories from many original books to create their own titles.

Works on Saratchandra in Indian and foreign languages are compiled in the third section. To cut the staggering list down, usually the more well known works (books and articles) have been incorporated. Emphasis, however, has always been on inclusion of publications reflecting diverse viewpoints. The author's name in each entry precedes the corresponding title which appears in italics. Wherever possible, the nature of topic of works in Bengali has been indicated. Titles of works on the author in Russian are given in

English translation. Diacritical marks have been used, in all the three sections, for the Bengali originals only.

Several sources have contributed to the compilation of this bibliography. The bibliography published by the National Library, Calcutta (1975), on the occasion of the birth centennial of Saratchandra has been pre-eminently useful in compiling the list of translations, especially those in Indian languages. *Saratchandrêr Grantha Bibaranî* by Abinashchandra Ghosal has likewise been especially helpful in preparing the section on the Bengali originals. The list of works on Saratchandra in Bengali and English has been compiled by Pradip Chaudhuri of the Jadavpur University Library; his sources are the National Library, Jadavpur University Library, Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Library and Sarat Smriti Mandir Library of Debanandapur (Hooghly). A corresponding list in Sindhi has been compiled by Beharilal Chhabria; in Nepali by Monohar Prasad Jaiswal; in Russian, Ukrainian and Lithuanian by Lidia Alexandrovna Stuzhevskaya.

B.S., appearing after year of publication, denotes Bangla Samvat (Bengali year). To convert a Bengali calendar year (B.S.) into corresponding Western calendar year (A.D.), 593 (594 if the Bengali months are Magh, Phalgun or Chaitra) is to be added to the B.S. year. Baisakh, Jyaishti, Asar, Sraban, Bhadra, Aswin, Kartik, Agrahavan, Paus, Magh, Phalgun and Chaitra are names of months in the Bengali Calendar.

Bangabani, Banglar Katha, Basumatî Benu, Bharatbarsa, Bharati, Bichitra, Chhotader Madhukari, Mauchak, Narayan, Pathsala, Sahitya and Yamuna—all mentioned in the section on the Bengali originals—are names of Bengali periodicals.

No compilation, however comprehensive, can claim completeness. The present attempt has, however, been made in the hope of making this bibliography only more exhaustive and informative.

# Works of Saratchandra

## 1. Novels

### BARADIDI (THE ELDEST SISTER)

Calcutta, Phanindranath Pal, Sept. 30, 1913.

First published under the title *Śiśu*, later renamed *Baradidi*. Appeared as a serial in *Bharati* (ed. Sarala Debi) in its issues of Baisakh, Jyaishta, and Asar 1314 B.S. (1907). First two instalments appeared without the author's name. The last instalment (Asar issue) carried it.

### BIRĀJ BAU (BIRĀJ)

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, May 2, 1914

Serialised in *Bharatbarsa*, the first instalment appearing in its Paus Magh issue, 1320 B.S. (1913-1914).

### PARINĪTĀ (THE MARRIED GIRL)

Calcutta, Ray M. C. Sarkar Bahadur & Sons, Aug. 10, 1914.

Published first as a serial in *Yamuna*, the first instalment appearing in its Phalgun issue, 1320 B.S. (1914).

### PANḌIT MAŚĀI (THE VILLAGE TEACHER)

Calcutta, Ray M. C. Sarkar Bahadur & Sons, Sept. 15, 1914.

### PALLI-SAMĀJ (THE RURAL SOCIETY)

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, Jan. 15, 1916.

First serialised in *Bharatbarsa*. Some changes made by the author in the fourteenth edition.

### CHANDRANĀTH

Calcutta, Ray M. C. Sarkar Bahadur & Sons, March 12, 1916.

First serialised in *Yamuna* in its Baisakh to Aswin issues, 1320 B.S. (1913). The fourteenth edition carried a statement from the author: '*Chandranāth* is an ear' work of mine. Its language was the same as followed in the

dialogues in stories and novels of those days. I have made changes only in this respect.'

### BAIKUNTHĒR WILL (BAIKUNTHA'S WILL)

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, June 5, 1916. First serialised in *Bharatbarsa* in its Jyaishta to Sraban issues, 1323 B.S. (1916).

### ARAKṢAṆĪYĀ (THE OLD MAID)

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, Nov. 20, 1916.

First published in *Bharatbarsa* in its issue of Aswin 1323 B.S. (1916).

### ŚRĪKĀNTA

Part One

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, Feb. 12, 1917.

First published as a serial under the title *Śrīkāntār Bhaman Kāhini* in *Bharatbarsa* in its issues of Magh to Chaitra, 1322 B.S.; and Baisakh to Magh, 1323 B.S. Author's name printed as Sri Srikanta Sarma in the serial. At the time of publication in a book form some portions of the text published in *Bharatbarsa* deleted.

### DĒBDĀS

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, June 30, 1917.

First serialised in *Bharatbarsa* in its issues of Chaitra 1323 B.S. (1917); and Baisakh to Asar 1324 B.S. (1917).

### NIṢKṚTI (THE DELIVERANCE)

Calcutta, Ray M. C. Sarkar Bahadur & Sons, July 1, 1917.

First part of this novellette published in 1321 B.S. under the title *Gharbhāṅgā* in the Baisakh issue of *Yamuna*, and the entire novelette appeared in the Bhadra, Kartik and Paus issues of *Bharatbarsa*, 1323 B.S. (1916).

### CHARITRAHĪN (THE CHARACTERLESS)

Calcutta, Ray M. C. Sarkar Bahadur & Sons, Nov. 11, 1917.

Part of the novel first serialised in Yamuna in its Kartik to Chaitra issues, 1320 B.S.; and also in 1321 B.S. (1914). Later completed and directly published in its book form. The fifth edition, published in 1344 B.S., revised by the author.

### DATTĀ (THE BETROTHED)

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, Sept. 2, 1918. First serialised in Bharatbarsa in its Paus to Chaitra issues of 1324 B.S. (1918); and Baisakh to Bhadra issues of 1325 B.S. (1918).

### ŚRĪKĀNTA

Part Two

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, Sept. 24, 1918.

First published in Bharatbarsa as a serial in its Asar to Bhadra, and Agrahayan to Chaitra issues of 1324 B.S.; and Baisakh to Asar, and Bhadra to Aswin issues of 1325 B.S. (1918).

### GRHADĀHA (THE WRECKED HOME)

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, March 20, 1920.

First serialised in Bharatbarsa in its Magh to Chaitra issues of 1323 B.S.; Baisakh to Aswin and Agrahayan to Phalgun issues of 1324 B.S.; Paus to Chaitra issues of 1325 B.S.; and Asar to Agrahayan issues of 1326 B.S. (1919).

### BĀMUNĒR MĒYĒ (THE BRAHMIN GIRL)

Calcutta, Sisir Publishing House, 1920.

Appeared as the first novel in the second year of the 'Upanyas Series' (Novel Series) started by Sisir Publishing House. Not published in any magazine.

### DĒNĀ-PĀŌNĀ (THE ACCOUNTS)

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, August 14, 1923.

First published in Bharatbarsa as a serial in its issues of Asar to Aswin, Paus and Chaitra 1327 B.S.; Jyaistha, Sraban, Kartik and Chaitra issues of 1328 B.S.; Baisakh to Sraban, Aswin, Kartik and Magh to Chaitra issues of 1329 B.S.; and Baisakh, Asar and Sraban issues of 1330 B.S. (1923).

### NABA-BIDHĀN (THE NEW ORDER)

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, October 1924.

First serialised in Bharatbarsa in the issues of Magh to Phalgun 1330 B.S., and Baisakh, Asar and Aswin-Kartik issues, 1331 B.S. (1924).

### PATHĒR DĀBĪ (THE RIGHT OF THE WAY)

Calcutta, Umadas Mukhopadhyay, August 31, 1926. First published as a serial in Bangabani in its Phalgun to Chaitra issues in 1329 B.S.; Baisakh, Asar to Bhadra, and Agrahayan to Phalgun issues in 1330 B.S.; Jyaistha, Aswin to Kartik, and Paus to Magh issues in 1331 B.S.; and Baisakh issue of 1332 B.S. (1925). Proscribed by the British Government immediately after its publication in book form. Released again in March 1939 during Fazlul Huq Ministry in Bengal.

### ŚRĪKĀNTA

Part Three

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, April 18, 1927.

First published as a serial in Bharatbarsa in its issues of Paus to Phalgun in 1327 B.S.; and Baisakh, Asar, Bhadra to Aswin and Paus issues in 1328 B.S. (1921).

### ŚĒṢ PRAŚNA (THE LAST QUESTION)

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, May 2, 1931. Serialised in Bharatbarsa in its issues of Sraban to Kartik, and Magh to Chaitra 1334 B.S.; Jyaistha to Sraban, Kartik, Paus and Phalgun 1335 B.S.; Baisakh, Sraban, Kartik, Paus, Phalgun and Chaitra 1336 B.S.; Chaitra 1337 B.S.; and Baisakh 1338 B.S. (1931). Author wrote in a letter to Dilip Kumar Ray: 'In *Śēṣ Praśna* I have attempted to give a glimpse of what highly modern literature should be like.'

### ŚRĪKĀNTA

Part Four

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, March 13, 1933.

First published as a serial in Bichitra in its issues of Phalgun to Chaitra 1338 B.S.; and Baisakh to Magh 1339 B.S. (1932).

### BIPRADĀS

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, Feb. 1, 1935.

Last among the novels published during author's lifetime. First ten chapters serialised first in Benu (1336-1338 B.S.). Publication of Benu ceasing thereafter, the entire novel appeared, from its beginning again, in Bichitra in its issues of Phalgun to Chaitra 1339 B.S.; Baisakh to Asar, and Aswin to Phalgun

1340 B.S.; Baisakh, Sraban to Bhadra, and Kartik to Magh 1341 B.S. (1934).

### ŚUBHADĀ

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, June 5, 1938.

Published after author's death, though actually an early work of his.

### ŚEṢĒR PARICHAYA (THE FINAL REVELATION)

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, June 7, 1939.

Incomplete work. Published in Bharatbarsa as a serial upto fifteenth chapter, which ended thus: 'রাখাল এ প্রশ্নের উত্তর দিল না, নীরবে বাহির হয়ে গেল।' (Rākhāl did not reply to this question, he walked out silently.) Later, chapter sixteen to twenty-six were written and added by Radharani Debi.

The portion (author's own) serialised in Bharatbarsa appeared in the issues of Asar to Aswin, Agrahayan, and Phalgun to Chaitra 1339 B.S.; Baisakh, Aswin, Agrahayan 1340 B.S.; Asar to Sraban, Kartik, Phalgun 1341 B.S.; and Baisakh 1342 B.S. (1935).

Beside the above originals, portions of the following three novels were written by Saratchandra:

### BĀRŌĀRĪ UPANYĀS (A NOVEL OF COMBINED EFFORT)

Calcutta, Indian Publishing House, April, 1921.

Only chapters twenty-one and twenty-two were written by Saratchandra.

### RASACHAKRA

Calcutta, Rasachakra Sahitya Samsad, 1936.

Ed. Kalidas Ray. First chapter written by Saratchandra and other chapters by eleven other writers.

### BHĀLAMANDA (GOOD AND BAD)

Calcutta, Batayan Publishing House, May, 1952.

Ed. Abinashchandra Ghosal. Only the first chapter written by Saratchandra and completed by other nine writers.

## 2. Short Stories

### BINDUR CHHĒLĒ Ō ANYĀNYA GALPA (BINDU'S SON AND OTHER STORIES)

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, July 3, 1914.

Includes three stories: *Bindur Chhēlē* (Bindu's Son),

*Rāmēr Sumati* (Rām's Conversion) and *Patha-Nirdēś* (The Direction).

First published in Yamuna, respectively in Sraban 1320 B.S., Phalgun-Chaitra 1319 B.S., and Baisakh 1320 B.S. (1913).

### MĒJDIDI (THE SECOND SISTER)

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, Dec. 12, 1915.

A Collection of three stories: *Mejdidi* (The Second Sister), *Darpachūrna* (The Humbling of Pride) and *Ādharē Ālō* (Light in Darkness).

First published in Bharatbarsa in 1321 B.S., respectively in Kartik, Magh and Bhadra issues. Later, an essay *Dīghharēr Smṛti* (Deoghhar Memories), included in the book. The last mentioned was published first in Bharatbarsa, Asar 1344 B.S. (1937).

### KĀŚĪNĀTH

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, Sept. 1, 1917.

Includes seven stories: *Kāśīnāth* (earlier title *Bāmun Thākuri*), first published in Sahitya, Phalgun-Chaitra 1319, B.S.; *Ālō Ō Chhāyā* (Light and Shade), first published in Yamuna, Asar and Bhadra 1320 B.S.; *Mandir* (The Temple), 'Kuntalin' award winner, *Bōjhā* (The Burden), first published in Yamuna, Kartik Paus 1319 B.S.; *Anupamār Prēm* (Anupamā's Love), first published in Sahitya, Chaitra 1320 B.S.; *Bālyā Smṛti* (Early Memories), first published in Sahitya, Magh 1310 B.S. (N.B. there is also an essay by the author under the same title *Bālyā Smṛti* and published in Aswin 1345 B.S. in Chhotader Madhukari); *Haricharan*, first published in Sahitya, Asar 1321 B.S. (1914).

### SWĀMĪ (THE HUSBAND)

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, Feb. 18, 1918.

Includes two stories: *Swāmī* (The Husband) and *Ēkādaśī Barāgī*. Former published first in 1324 B.S. (1917) in Narayan in its Sraban-Bhadra issue; latter published in Bharatbarsa in Kartik 1324 B.S. (1917).

### CHHABI (THE PORTRAIT)

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, Jan. 16, 1920.

Includes three stories: *Chhabi* (The portrait), first published in 1316 B.S. (1909) in Agamoni, an autumn publication (ed. Suresh Chandra Samajpati); *Bilāwī*, first published in Bharati in Baisakh 1325 B.S. (1918); *Māmār Phal* (Results of Litigation), first published in 1325 B.S. (1918) in Parbani, an autumn publication (ed. Nagendranath Gangopadhyay).

## HARILAKṢMĪ

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, March 13, 1926.

Includes three stories: *Harilakṣmī*, first published in Basumati, autumn number, 1332 B.S. (1925); *Mahēś*, first published in Bangabani in Aswin 1329 B.S.; *Abhāgīr Sūarga* (Abhāgī's Heaven), first published in Bangabani in Magh 1329 B.S. (1923).

## ANURĀDHĀ SĀTĪ O PARĒŚ

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, March 18, 1934

Includes three stories: *Anurādhā*, first published in Bharatbarsa in Chaitra 1340 B.S.; *Satī* (The Faithful Wife), first published in Bangabani in Asar 1334 B.S.; *Parēś*, first published in Sarater Phul, an autumn publication (ed. Naliniranjan Pandit), in Bhadra 1331 B.S. (1924).

## CHHĪLĒBĪLĀKĀR GALPA (THE BOYHOOD STORIES)

Calcutta, M. C. Sarkar & Sons, April, 1938.

A collection of seven stories (illustrated): *Lālu*, first published in Mauchhak in Chaitra 1344 B.S.; *Chhīlēdhunā*, first published in Chhotader Aharika, an autumn publication (ed. Brajamohan Das), in 1342 B.S. (1935); *Kalkātār Nūtan-dā*, first published in Galper Manimala (ed. Premendra Mitra), an annual publication, in 1341 B.S.; *Lālu*, first published in Sonar Kathi (ed. Narendra Deb and Radharani Debi), an autumn publication, in 1344 B.S. (1937); *Bachhar Pāñchās Pāber Fēkū Dinēr Kāhni* (Story of a Day Some Fifty Years Back), first published in Pathsala in Aswin-Kartik 1344 B.S.; *Lalu; Deoghari Smṛti* (Deoghar Memories), first published in Bharatbarsa Asar 1341 B.S. (1937) The third story actually forms part of the seventh chapter in author's *Śrikānta*, Part One.

## ŚARATCHANDRĒR ŚRĒŚṬHA GALPA (BEST STORIES OF SARAT CHANDRA)

Calcutta, Indian Associated Pub. Co., 1952.

A collection of ten short stories

### 3. Drama

## SŌRĀŚĪ

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, Aug. 13, 1927.

*Dinā-Pāṇnā* dramatised by the author. First produced on the stage by Natya Mandir Ltd. of Sisir Kumar Bhaduri on 21 Śrabān 1334 B.S. (1927).

## RAMĀ

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, Aug. 4, 1928.

*Pallī-Samāj* dramatised by the author. First produced by the Art Theatre on 19 Śrabān 1335 B.S. (1928) on the stage of the Star.

## BIJAYĀ

Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, Dec. 24, 1934.

*Dattā* dramatised by the author. First produced by the Naba Natya Mandir on 6 Paus 1341 B.S. (1934) on the stage of the Star.

### 4. Drama Collections

## ŚARAT NĀTYA SAMBHĀR (A COLLECTION OF DRAMAS BY SARAT CHANDRA)

Calcutta, Mitra & Ghosh, 1960.

## ŚARAT NĀTYA SAMGRAHA (A COLLECTION OF DRAMAS BY SARAT CHANDRA)

Calcutta, Bak Sahitya, 1964.

### 5. Essays

## NĀRĪR MŪLYA (THE WORTH OF WOMAN)

Calcutta, Ray M. C. Sarkar Bahadur & Sons, March 18, 1924.

First published in Yamuna in its issues of Baisakh, Asar-Bhadra, Aswin 1320 B.S. (1913) under the pseudonym Anila Debi (name of Saratchandra's eldest sister).

## TARUṆĒR BIDRŌHA (THE REVOLT OF THE YOUTH)

Calcutta, Saraswati Library, April 18, 1929.

Presidential address at Bangiya Yuba Sammilani in 1929. Three years following its publication, Arya Publishing Company brought out a new enlarged edition on Aug. 23, 1932. Beside *Taruṇēr Bidrōha*, a second essay *Satyā Ō Mithyā* (Truth and Falsehood) was included in it. The latter was published earlier in Banglar Katha in its issues of 20 Magh and 5 Phalgun 1328 B.S. (1922).

## SWADĒŚ O SĀHITYA (MOTHERLAND AND LITERATURE)

Mymensingh, Arya Publishing Co., Aug. 1932.

A collection of seventeen essays, five coming under the head *Swadēś* and twelve under *Sāhitya*.

ŚARATCHANDRA Ō CHHĀTRASAMĀJ (SARATCHANDRA AND THE STUDENT COMMUNITY)  
Calcutta, Sriharsha Karyalay, March, 1938.  
A compilation of addresses to students (ed. Murari De). Includes seven such addresses. Published immediately after the author's death.

## 6. Collected Works

ŚARATCHANDRĒR GRANTHĀBALĪ  
(COLLECTED WORKS OF SARATCHANDRA)  
Calcutta, Satish Chandra Mukhopadhyay, Basumati Karyalay, v. 1-7, Oct. 20, 1919 to Sept. 17, 1935.

ŚARAT SĀHITYA SAMGRAHA (COLLECTED WORKS OF SARATCHANDRA)  
Calcutta, Śarat Smriti Mandir v. 1-13, 1951 to 1960.

ŚARAT SĀHITYA SAMGRAHA (COLLECTED WORKS OF SARATCHANDRA)  
Calcutta, M. C. Sarkar & Sons. v. 1-13, 1967 --.

ŚARAT RACHANĀBALĪ (COLLECTED WORKS OF SARATCHANDRA)  
Calcutta, Sarat Samiti. v. 1-5, 1976-77.  
Ed. Subodh Chandra Sengupta, Debipada Bhattacharya, Gopal Chandra Ray.

## 7. Posthumous Publications

ŚARATCHANDRĒR PATRĀBALĪ (LETTERS OF SARATCHANDRA)  
Calcutta, Bookland Ltd., Feb., 1918.  
Ed. Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay. A collection of letters of Saratchandra.

ŚARATCHANDRĒR PUSTAKĀKĀRĒ APRAKĀŚITA RACHANĀBALĪ: BIBIDHA SAṆKALAN GRANTHA (WORKS OF SARATCHANDRA UNPUBLISHED IN BOOK FORM: A MISCELLANY)  
Calcutta, Gurudas Chattopadhyay & Sons, July 23, 1951.

Ed. Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay. Various articles previously scattered in the pages of different magazines compiled in this publication. Includes stories, novels (incomplete), essays, letters, and discussions. The fifth edition, Baisakh 1375 B.S. (1968), has fifty five entries, including two incomplete novels: *Jāgaraṇ* and *Āgāmi Kāl*.

ŚARATCHANDRĒR CHITTHIPATRA (LETTERS OF SARATCHANDRA)  
Calcutta, Sahitya Sadan, Nov., 1954.  
Ed. Gopal Chandra Ray. A Collection of letters of Saratchandra.

ŚARATCHANDRĒR APRAKĀŚITA RACHANĀBALĪ (UNPUBLISHED WORKS OF SARATCHANDRA)  
Calcutta, Bak-Sahitya, 1968.  
Ed. Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay.

ŚARAT BICHITRĀ (SELECTED WORKS OF SARATCHANDRA)  
Calcutta, Prakash Bhaban, 1970. Some selected works.

ŚARATCHANDRĒR AJÑĀTA RACHANĀ (UNKNOWN WRITINGS OF SARATCHANDRA)  
Calcutta, Sahitya Sadan, Nov. 6, 1976.  
Comp. and ed. Gopal Chandra Ray. Includes *kōrēl*, *Bihar*, *Antaryāmī*, a dramatic version of *Bāmunēr Mēyē*, a few essays (some incomplete), incomplete stories, a copy of a question paper set by the author for the B. A. Examination (C.U.) in Bengali (1928), and some other documents.



# Translations in Indian and Foreign Languages

## ASSAMESE

### BIRĀJ BĀU

*Biraj bau* trans. Shanti Datta, ed. B. B. Chaudhury. Shillong, Charu Sahitya Kutir, 1955

### CHANDRANĀTH

*Chandranath* trans. Kailash Ch. Sharma, ed. B. B. Chaudhury. Shillong, Charu Sahitya Kutir, 1957

### DAITĀ

*Datta* –trans. Kamaleswar Chaliha, ed. B. B. Chaudhury. Shillong, Charu Sahitya Kutir, 1961

### DĒBDĀS

*Debas* trans. Tarini Kanta Sharma, ed. B. B. Chaudhury. Shillong, Charu Sahitya Kutir, 1951

### PARINĪTĀ

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## PAITHA-NIRDĒŚ

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